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ABSTRACT

This journal consists of selected refereed papers from the third Annual Conference of the Australian Research in Early Childhood Education (1995). Contained in the publication are the following articles: (1) "Longitudinal Studies--Are They Worth It?" (Judith Cowley); (2) "Scripts for Learning: Reflecting Dynamics of Classroom Life" (Joy Cullen, Alison St. George); (3) "Identifying Dilemmas for Early Childhood Educators" (Sue Dockett, Kim Tegel); (4) "Investigating Young Children's Home Technological Language and Experience" (Marilyn Fleer); (5) "How Do Early Childhood Teachers Support Young Children's Learning?" (Ruth F. Gardner); (6) "Possible Effects of Early Childhood Music on Mathematical Achievement" (Noel Geoghegan, Michael Mitchelmore); (7) "Beyond Mr. Bubbles: An Analysis of the Public Image of Early Childhood Care and Education in Western Sydney" (Jacqueline Hayden); (8) "Dads, Data and Discourse: Theory, Analysis and Interpretation in Parenting Research" (Annette Holland); (9) "Staff Supervision in Long Day Care Centres in New South Wales" (Karen Kearns); (10) "Quality Talk in Early Childhood Programs" (Laurie Makin); (11) "Ritual and Pedagogy: How One Teacher Uses Ritual in a Pre-Primary Classroom Setting" (Carmel Maloney); (12) "Young Children Who Experience Domestic Violence: An Important Issue for Early Childhood Teachers" (Jennifer Smith, and others); (13) "Publication Opportunities for Early Childhood Academics" (Jennifer Sumsion); and (14) "Arts Games for Young Children" (Louie Suthers, Veronicah Larkin). (KDFB)

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AUSTRALIAN RESEARCH IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Volume 1
1996

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Journal for Australian Research in Early Childhood Education

Volume 1 1996

Selected refereed papers from the third Annual Conference of the Australian Research in Early Childhood Education, Faculty of Education, University of Canberra ACT, January 1995.

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CONTENTS

		Page
Editorial		iv
Review Panel		vi
Guidelines for authors		vii
Longitudinal studies - are they worth it?	*Judith Cowley*	1
Scripts for learning: reflecting dynamics of classroom life	*Joy Cullen and Alison St George*	10
Identifying dilemmas for early childhood educators	*Sue Dockett and Kim Tegel*	20
Investigating young children's home technological language and experience	*Marilyn Fleer*	29
How do early childhood teachers support young children's learning?	*Ruth F Gardner*	47
Possible effects of early childhood music on mathematical achievement	*Noel Geoghegan and Michael Mitchelmore*	57
Beyond Mr Bubbles: an analysis of the public image of early childhood care and education in Western Sydney	*Jacqueline Hayden*	65
Dads, data and discourse: theory, analysis and interpretation in parenting research	*Annette Holland*	77
Staff supervision in long day care centres in New South Wales	*Karen Kearns*	85
Quality talk in early childhood programs	*Laurie Makin*	100
Ritual and pedagogy: how one teacher uses ritual in a pre-primary classroom setting	*Carmel Maloney*	110
Young children who experience domestic violence: an important issue for early childhood teachers	*Jennifer Smith, Donna Berthelsen and Ian O'Connor*	119
Publication opportunities for early childhood academics	*Jennifer Sumsion*	132
Arts games for young children	*Louie Suthers and Veronicah Larkin*	146

EDITORIAL COMMENTS

This edition of the journal contains a broad selection of papers. Some studies focus on curriculum, others on teacher education, some on children's experiences of school and preschool, staff supervision in long day care, publication opportunities, men's perceptions of fatherhood, teacher interactional patterns and the public image of child care. The common theme that binds them all is their focus on research.

The journal begins with a thoughtful discussion by Cowley of the results of her longitudinal study of otitis media and its effect on children's academic progress. Cullen and St George also present a longitudinal study, however, the focus is on children's acquisition of scripts for school learning. Data were collected on children's classroom experiences in both their first and second year of school in New Zealand. Children's perceptions of learning tasks, particularly metacognitive awareness, were ascertained In contrast, a paper by Maloney presented later in the journal examines the forms and functions of rituals exhibited by preschool teachers. A case study is presented of a preschool teacher which contrasts rituals observed with understandings of pedagogy, theories, beliefs and ideologies held by the teacher.

Dockett and Tegel outline their action research into *situation-based* learning. This thoughtful paper provides details of not only the process for assembling useful dilemmas that occur in children's services, but also describes and illustrates their use with pre-service students. With limited resources in teacher education generally, this paper provides an excellent example of how to improve both the teaching of subjects as well as the understandings developed by pre-service students.

This is followed by two papers which deal with curriculum. The first paper, by Fleer, reports on a study which sought to find out children's home technological experiences with a view to ascertaining how curriculum implementation of technology should proceed in preschool, child care and the first years of school. The second paper, by Geoghegan and Mitchelmore, outlines the findings of a study which explored the assumption that music and maths are linked. They specifically tested whether or not a rich musical year would enhance mathematical scores obtained in the first year of school. Another paper focused on curriculum is that of Suthers and Larkin, which appears at the end of the journal. They present an evaluation study of arts games for children from birth to five years of age in long day care settings. Their specific target groups were two year olds and four year olds.

Two papers focus directly on the interactional patterns of teachers. Gardner presents an interesting study of the interactional patterns of five teachers. She highlights the range of analysis tools used in assessing staff-child interactions and details their effect. She argues that, by making explicit the goals and subsequent interactional patterns observed, teachers will be in a better position to manage their future interactions with increased awareness and intent. Further in the journal is a paper by Makin which details interactional patterns of staff. Makin specifically links her paper with the Principles outlines in the Quality Improvement and Accreditation System Handbook. Her discussion focuses directly on teacher talk and how quality can be documented.

This is followed by a report of staff supervision in long day care centres in New South Wales. Kearns details the strategies used to supervise staff and promote professional development.

Hayden presents a thoughtful study into the public image of child care. Through the analysis of film, television, magazines and news media in Western Sydney in 1993, Hayden argues that a negative image is predominantly portrayed. Hayden presents a thoughtful discussion on the

implications for staff, the profession and for children. This is followed by a paper by Holland on the perceptions of fatherhood held by men. She argues that the media, popular literature and some academics are presenting an image of fathers as being closely involved in child rearing. However, she suggests that personnel working in early childhood settings have not embraced these changes. Within this context, she presents the findings of her research into how men perceive, as well as understand, their experience of fatherhood.

Further into the journal is a paper by Smith, Berthelson and O'Connor which deals with young children's experience of domestic violence. They argue that a High level of family violence prior to separation is a strong predictor of behavioural problems exhibited by children. The implications for dealing With these behavioural problems are outlined in the paper.

Finally, contained within the journal is a most interesting paper by Sumsion on how to get your work published. Sumsion surveyed the editors of 121 Australian and international journals about their policies, processes and publication information. This article is a 'must' for anyone considering publishing their work - but also a reminder for the more experienced writers!

The range and number of articles in this edition are indicative of the policy change which took place last year to allow papers not given at the conference to be submitted for consideration for this journal. This journal provides Australian researchers with the opportunity to publish their work. It also represents the only Australian research journal which focuses specifically on early childhood education (0 to 8 years). The journal is also a statement about the range and quality of the research that is taking place in Australia. Overall, the production of this journal is a collaborative venture for Australian researchers. The University of Canberra is simply the vehicle for ensuring it takes place.

Marilyn Fleer
Editor

University of Canberra
December 1995

REVIEW PANEL

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RESEARCH IN AUSTRALIAN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION GUIDELINES FOR AUTHORS FOR THE PREPARATION OF PAPERS AND DISKS

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Mary Smith
University of Central Australia
and
John A Smith
Alice Springs, College

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Include an abstract of between 100-200 words, headed **ABSTRACT** (centred/bold/caps), immediately following the title; the whole abstract should be indented.

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Tables should be given Arabic numbers, with centred, capital heads/not bolded with a blank line between the table number and the title:

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e.g.,

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References to journals and books should be as follows: In the body of the paper references should appear, for example, as Bernstein (1991), or Fisher & Fraser (1983). References in parentheses are presented as (White & Tisher, 1986). These references should be placed in the reference list as follows:

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White, R, & Tisher, R (1986). Natural sciences. In M. C. Wittrock (ed.) *Handbook of research on teaching* (3rd edn) New York: McMillan.

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LONGITUDINAL STUDIES - ARE THEY WORTH IT?

Judith Cowley
University of Newcastle

ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on a longitudinal study of otitis media in young children which was begun in 1981. The researched aimed to provide information concerning the incidence and prevalence of otitis media in young children in the Newcastle Region and to follow the academic progress of the subjects.

The results of the original research established that, for the 210 children in this study, otitis media was not an atypical condition, as only 37% had shown no evidence of the condition by the end of the first year. In addition, pre-academic and academic testing supported the view that children with a chronic middle ear condition experienced more difficulties in learning language related academic tasks than did their peers.

The follow up study conducted in 1991 gathered further data on the academic progress of some of the students who had been identified as having experienced chronic otitis media. The results provided valuable information concerning subject selection, assessment procedures and interpretation of results, when viewed over time.

INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, most researchers consider a group of subjects, for a specific purpose, over a short, finite space of time. The advantages of such studies are obvious. They are cost effective, can be completed relatively quickly, the methodology remains in line with current thoughts in the subject area and they can result in a respectable publication, all within the space of about 12 months. All these, of course, are important in our present academic climate.

Against these advantages are those given for the longitudinal study, which centre around confirmation (or otherwise) of criteria for subject selection and the ability to observe the influence of particular variables over time. The disadvantages, however, are equally easy to identify. Subjects have an inexcusable habit of 'getting up and moving'. Testing regimes, which sounded wonderful at the beginning of the study, have a nasty habit of 'falling out of favour' and/or being replaced by bigger, better, brighter ones long before the completion of the particular research program. Then, of course, there are the problems of time and money.

The strengths of longitudinal methodology are particularly useful when problems associated with prediction are concerned. When, therefore, the Special Education program in 1980, at the then Newcastle College of Advanced Education, was confronted by a seemingly disproportionate number of children with chronic (and often previously undiagnosed) middle ear disease, a longitudinal study seemed to be the best way to proceed. The number of children with otitis media in the general population in Newcastle was unknown, posing a doubt that all children with chronic middle ear problems need special education, as suggested by some of the literature.

The situation with regard to otitis media was, at the time, far from clear. Otitis media had been the subject of research over a number of years, mostly overseas and generally with atypical

populations such as ethnic minority groups (e.g., American Indians, Australian Aborigines) or those with particular problems, such as demonstrated learning and/or hearing difficulties. The program in Newcastle at that time appeared to 'fit' the pattern, however a number of questions remained.

A high proportion of students in need of special education at primary and secondary school level had a demonstrated history of chronic middle ear disease (80% in the Newcastle program, in the 3 year period, 1978-1980). However, did this mean that other students did not? Also of interest was the possibility that young children with chronic middle ear problems may commence school with different skills and developmental levels than their peers. If this is indeed the case, then special programs involving listening skills which foster language development may help such children.

During the years following 1980, a number of researchers continued to explore the possibility of long-term effects of repeated episodes of middle ear disease on children's ability to learn. In particular were the studies of Lous and Fiellau-Nikolajsen (1984), and those of Teele et al (1984), Klein (1986), Silva et al (1986), Share et al (1986) and of Lous (1990).

As in the research reported prior to 1983 (e.g., Friel-Patti et al, 1982), many of the results were contradictory. Lous and Fiellau (1984), for example, found no effect on the reading achievement of children with a previous history of repeated episodes of middle ear disease, while Teele et al (1984), reported small but statistically significant deficits on language tests, for children who had middle ear disease for prolonged periods of time during their first few years of life. Silva et al (1986) also reported statistically significant deficits in the reading abilities of children with a history of middle ear disease, at age five. Share et al (1986) however, reported that such effects were small and that there did not appear to be an excess of children with histories of middle ear disease among those with severe difficulties in reading.

The research concerned with the effects of middle ear disease in infants is likewise confusing. Klein (1986) reported that population surveys found that 30-40% of children experienced three or more episodes of otitis media during their first few years of life. Friel et al (1982) monitored the hearing status of 35 infants during their first two years of life. Results reported indicated that 71.5% of those with recurrent episodes of otitis media demonstrated language development scores of six or more months below age level. Roberts et al (1986) however, failed to replicate these results.

In 1990, Friel-Patti and Finitzo reported the results of their study of 483 children. These results indicated significant effects on language development of the hearing loss, often associated with episodes of otitis media, during the first two years of a child's life. These effects, however, appeared to be small. The authors also reported that they had not found significant numbers of otitis-prone children with clinically delayed language.

Such conflicting results are confusing. Bishop and Edmundson (1986) however, suggested that two factors seemed to be important in determining whether or not language deficits would be associated with otitis media. These factors were the child's hearing status at the time of any assessment and whether any other risk factors for language impairment were present.

Grunwell (1992:216) claimed, in her paper on remediation of children with phonological disorders, that many children had a history of mild hearing problems due to otitis media with effusion. Such children, she stated, 'have detectable cognitive-linguistic deficits in both comprehension and production. Their educational progress is often slow and they may exhibit attention problems'.

This research, then, leads back to the study in the Hunter Region (Cowley, 1985), which was 'revisited' in 1990.

The original study (1981-1983) involved a multi-disciplinary team of researchers, a practice not common in Australia at that time. The team included researchers from the National Acoustic Laboratory, Sydney, the Department of Linguistics at the University of Newcastle, The Special Education Centre at the then Newcastle College of Advanced Education as well as representatives from the Hunter Region Departments of School Education and Health (Cowley, 1985).

The study was designed to provide the following information:

- the incidence of middle ear disease in Kindergarten children in five schools in the Hunter Region in 1981;
- a comparison of the level of performance of children with a history of middle ear disease with that of their peers without such a history, in areas such as auditory and cognitive processing, language development and, later, in reading; and
- any possible links which could be demonstrated between middle ear disease and environment and/or socio-economic status.

The hypotheses predicted that the incidence of otitis media in the Newcastle region would be high; that there would be a positive link between this incidence and the environment and/or socio-economic status of the families of the children; and that there would be differences in the language and learning abilities of those children with chronic middle ear disease and those with no apparent problem.

The subjects selected for the study were all children in each of five schools, who were enrolled in the Kindergarten classes by 30 May 1981, and who had received parental permission to take part in the research (N=210). The schools were selected on the basis of ethnic homogeneity and to represent a range of socio-economic populations, together with a range of environments (e.g., lakeside, rural, urban and industrial).

All children had repeated assessment for hearing acuity and middle ear status, over the full school year. They were also assessed in language development and for auditory and cognitive processing skills. In addition to standardised and criterion referenced assessments, a 30 minute language sample was collected from each of the children by the Speech Pathologists. Each language sample was then transcribed and reviewed to provide a measure of each child's use of language.

The initial assessment regime was completed by December, 1981. It provided an indication of each child's language, preliteracy and auditory processing skills, together with their middle ear status. The regime involved two audiologists from the National Acoustic Laboratory, Sydney, one speech pathologist, two special educators, class teachers and parents. The children were then retested at the end of 1982 and 1983 to assess their academic progress.

TABLE 1
MIDDLE EAR STATUS, DECEMBER 1981

Chronic otitis media	48
Indeterminant status	122
Clear	40
Age range: 4yrs 6mths - 6yrs	

The results at this time were interesting. The major ones were:

- only 37% (40 children) showed no evidence of middle ear disease during 1981, supporting the view that otitis media should not be seen as an atypical condition in early childhood, in the Newcastle/Lake Macquarie region (Table 1);

- no links were demonstrated between middle ear and environment and/or socio-economic status;

- the children who failed the audiometric testing on at least two consecutive occasions, the Experimental Group (N=48), were found to experience more difficulties with auditory processing and reading tasks than did their peers, when matched for gender, cognitive processing and language skills;

- children in the Experimental Group were also found to use their expressive language skills differently to most of their peers. They were observed to use only simple language structures with few embellishments such as adjectives, adverbs, descriptive phrases or subordinate clauses, nor to ask questions to gain information or to clarify possible misunderstandings; and

- the level of expressive language ability with which the children entered formal school (i.e., at age 5, in NSW) appeared to have important implications for subsequent academic progress. Such correlations were not demonstrated to the same degree for the receptive language assessment component.

Given the above findings, it was concerning that neither early childhood teachers nor the parents of children who presented with language delay demonstrated clear knowledge of appropriate action to help the children. Typically, parents enrolled the children in an early childhood centre, on the basis that:

If my child really has a problem, the teachers will tell me about it. (Parent interview)

Teachers, on the other hand, were reluctant to question language development too deeply, as they were unaware of any reliable testing procedures, speech pathologists were rarely available, and:

Children generally grow out of such problems. (Teacher Questionnaire)

The findings also questioned both teaching and medical practice and understanding of the problems raised. In particular, the advisability of accepting middle ear disease as medical in nature and implication alone, was viewed with great concern.

The conclusions suggested that the children with a history of repeated middle ear disease, with effusion, appeared to have developed different strategies for listening, learning and language use than had their peers who did not have such a history. Further, such different strategies, it was suggested, often proved inadequate when the children moved from a home or pre-school (3 to 5 year olds) setting, into the more formal environment of compulsory schooling.

The scene revisited

It was not possible, in 1990, to assess and interview all the children involved in the initial study (time and money, yet again). It was decided, however, to attempt to locate and retest the pairs of

matched subjects. The pairs originally differed only in their middle ear status, using the parameters of the research.

Immediately problems began to surface. As a result of time, the economic situation and the Newcastle earthquake, the children did not always prove easy to locate and some had to be posted 'missing'. Thirty two children were located, however with another difficulty quickly surfacing. Of the sixteen matched pairs, four had become unmatched, as the Control Subject, in each case, was found to have had grommets inserted by Year 3, thus placing the students in the 'chronic middle ear status category, rather than in the Control' ('Clear') as previously (Table 2).

TABLE 2
MIDDLE EAR STATUS

	1981	1990
Chronic otitis media	48	25
Indeterminant status	122	122
Clear	40	36*

* Represents maximum possible figure

All children were assessed for reading ability and for their attitudes to both themselves and to school. The school record cards were accessed, in order to provide background information on school attendance patterns and overall academic progression through the grades.

RESULTS

The results showed that the students from the Experimental Group were significantly less likely to have a positive perception of themselves and of their academic ability than were their peers ($p<0.05$) and were much more likely to have had extended absences from school. In all except one case, each of these students had seventy or more days absent over the nine years, compared to the average of 52 days for the whole group, and four of the students had repeated a year, where no student had repeated from the Control Group. In addition, all but two students in the Experimental Group had been referred for special education assistance, while only three students had been so referred from the Control Group.

It was also of interest to note that, of the students who initially presented with poor expressive language skills, none achieved a Reading Age within two years of their chronological age. This was unrelated to the middle ear status of the students and a similar correlation with Receptive Language performance continued to be absent.

DISCUSSION OF THE LONGITUDINAL STUDY RESULTS

The implications of these results are of particular importance in three main areas: subject selection, assessment procedures and interpretation of results.

Subject Selection

In this particular study, the difficulties inherent in the selection of control and experimental subjects in such research are highlighted. Only sixteen of the original twenty four matched pairs of subjects

were located for the follow-up study and, of the sixteen subjects judged in the previous audiometric assessments to be free of middle ear disease, four were found, during the follow-up research, to have had sufficient episodes of otitis media to warrant the insertion of grommets. A further two were found, during interview, to have experienced at least two episodes, requiring less intrusive treatment.

When considered in context, this leaves a possible 34 students out of the original 210 (i.e., 16%) with no reported middle ear involvement. This in itself makes generalisation from the many reported studies difficult, given that subject selection is often undertaken through parent or teacher interview, special education referral or by single audiometric testing procedures.

Where otitis media continues to present as a common childhood ailment, often undiagnosed, the selection of any 'control' group for research appears difficult.

In 1981, it was unusual to collect language samples, in different settings, from children for analysis in educational research. Although often difficult and always time consuming, both intervening research in early childhood, together with the longitudinal results of this study, support the view that these procedures are valuable. Such value lies within the implications for other language learning related areas such as early literacy and numeracy, in addition to factors relating to more immediate Early Intervention programs.

The present study also underlines the importance of multiple audiometric measures to determine the hearing and middle ear status of young children. It has been demonstrated both in this study and in subsequent research and experience, that such status is subject to change, over time, with inherent difficulties both in an educational and medical sense, as well as in subject selection for research.

Interpretation of Results

One advantage of this longitudinal study, has been to focus attention on the possible long term effects of children's abilities at entry to compulsory school settings, on their later academic progression.

An important finding in the initial study has gained further strength through the 1990 research. Where young children develop ineffective learning strategies before entry to formal school, they appear unable to change these strategies sufficiently to effectively improve their learning, without help. This view has found additional support through the work of Ashman and Elkins (1994) and their colleagues.

Discussion

The implications of the 1985 and 1990 studies for early childhood educators are important. Given recent findings that 9% of infants will have an episode of otitis media by 3 months of age (Maxon et al, 1993), staff in early childhood services need to become aware of methods to ameliorate the effects, both known and suspected, of middle ear disease.

The Maxon et al study highlights concern with conductive hearing loss, due to otitis media, in addition to factors such as the heightened exposure to infectious diseases of children in day care centres. Concern is also expressed about the increased number of infants who are bottle, rather than breast fed, which in turn contributes to an increased risk of developing otitis media. Interestingly, this greater risk relate primarily to the feeding position, rather than to an added susceptibility to infectious diseases.

While the implications for infants and toddlers are important to note, it is also important to recognise the findings which refer to children up to at least the age of eight years. There is a growing volume of research data, including the studies reported in this paper which suggests that

at any one time 25% of children in early childhood programs may not be hearing properly. This fact has important implications for health, safety, educational planning and programming. Related to this also that which suggests that children experiencing chronic middle ear disease develop ineffective expressive language and learning strategies before entry to formal school, which then reflect in poor academic performance.

Recent research in the Hunter Valley has provided additional data concerning the incidence of hearing difficulties in young school aged children and the ability of their teachers to identify such difficulties and to provide effective programs for their children (Hayden, 1994). This particular study surveyed fifty two teachers, in a number of pre and primary schools, in order to establish their knowledge of sensory disabilities and the effects of such disabilities on child development, health and learning. This information was then discussed in the context of the results of the school health screening program, conducted by the local community health service in these particular schools during 1994 (Table 3).

TABLE 3
RESULTS OF THE LOWER HUNTER COMMUNITY HEALTH SERVICES 1994
SCHOOL SCREENING PROGRAM FOR HEARING ACUITY

No. of children screened	3,465
Age Range	4 to 12 years
Hearing defects identified	230

While there was some variation in the incidence of disabilities identified in various schools, the teachers participating in the study all expressed their concern at the number of children identified by the health service as presenting with a sensory disability (47% of the classroom population of teachers who completed the survey). This concern was reflected in both the 100% return rate of survey forms and agreement for interview.

The survey indicated that, of the fifty two teachers participating, thirty seven had one or more children in their class identified in the screen as having a problem, with twenty one of those teachers reporting that they had failed to detect that problem in the child or children concerned. Of those identified with hearing difficulties, the majority of the children in preschool and kindergarten were suspected of having middle ear disease as the cause of the hearing loss.

More than 60% of teachers participating in the survey reported that they were unable to:

- detect any problem with hearing or related speech difficulties;
- notice any behavioural characteristics, visual or auditory; or
- detect specific developmental problems or abnormalities in speech or in the voice quality of the children whom they taught.

Although the majority of the children assessed were in the 4 to 6 year age range, it is of particular concern to note that a small proportion of the population with a sensory disability detected for the first time in the 1994 screening program, were in year six. As this indicates that these students had been attending school for at least seven years with such difficulties unidentified, questions relating to the follow up of children missed during the screen in their first year of school need to be carefully considered.

As in findings reported in previous research (e.g., Collins, 1984; Gow, 1989), the teachers in the Hayden study commented on the need for additional professional development, access to resources and to specialist teachers and therapists, in the area of sensory disability. Without such additional support, the teachers indicated a lack of confidence in their ability to either identify children with potential difficulties in sensory development, or to cater adequately for their needs in the regular classroom.

CONCLUSION

The findings of both the Hayden study (1994) and of the reported longitudinal study are important for both theory and practice.

The longitudinal study provides support for previous research indicating possible long term effects of early chronic otitis media. Despite the difficulties which such studies pose, the process is a valuable one, as it allows for more informed conclusions to be drawn about subject selection, testing regimes and educational programs. It also facilitates, for later studies, a more confident selection of subjects and assessment procedures.

The findings of the Hayden study, however, indicate the dangers inherent in the belief that teachers in both the early childhood and primary sectors of education are sufficiently knowledgable about the indicators of hearing difficulties, of suitable action to take where such a difficulty is suspected and of the implementation of appropriate teaching and learning strategies to facilitate the education of children with such difficulties.

Within the area of middle ear disease, the future is brighter for our children in 1995 than it was in 1983. Medical and educational professional education programs now acknowledge the transdisciplinary nature of both the problems of and solutions to many language and learning difficulties. Such an attitude can only lead to better and more effective research in the area and, in turn, to better and more effective intervention programs. It is important, however, not to lose sight of the fact that the quality of such programs relates directly to the knowledge and skills of those professionals within them and to the availability of effective support services and practical resources.

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SCRIPTS FOR LEARNING: REFLECTING DYNAMICS OF CLASSROOM LIFE

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on children's acquisition of scripts for school learning. A longitudinal qualitative approach was adopted to study five year old children's first term in a new entrant classroom and their classroom experiences one year later. Children were observed in regular class activities. Informal and semi-structured interviews were conducted to elicit children's perceptions of learning tasks. School beginners viewed learning in terms of procedural matters and classroom routines. In their second year, children's perceptions of learning reflected changes in classroom dynamics and teaching styles and a greater awareness of learning content. Results suggest that teaching practices need to support the construction of scripts for learning and not simply scripts for routines and procedures.

INTRODUCTION

In New Zealand, children commence school on or near their fifth birthday. This continuous entry policy means that children enrol in classrooms in which more experienced learners are present. In this context, the process of how children adjust to school learning is likely to involve interactions with more experienced peers. Accordingly, it is likely that children's perceptions of school learning will reflect their incidental experiences with peers in addition to adult-structured learning experiences. From this perspective, the focus of the present study addressed two questions: (1) how do school beginners perceive the role of school learner, and (2) how do dynamics of classroom life affect changing perceptions of school learning?

Contemporary cognitive perspectives on learning which emphasise the social and situated nature of learning (e.g., Forman, Minick & Stone, 1993; Rogoff, 1990) initially guided our decision to adopt a qualitative approach. Research in early childhood classrooms from anthropological and ethnographic perspectives (e.g., Klein, Kantor & Fernie, 1988; Hatch, 1990; Tammivaara & Enright, 1986) indicates that, in order to understand children's early school experiences on their own terms, it is important both to observe children in the natural classroom setting and to talk with them about their learning experiences. Several strands of cognitive research which related conceptually to the focus of the study further supported our major methodological orientation. In each of these areas, limitations of earlier work emphasised the value of adopting procedures which would capture the culture of a new entrant classroom and enable us to depict the richness of young children's early school experiences.

During the 1980s, script theory was applied to the study of young children's social understandings. In this work, the concept of script referred to the schematic representations of repetitive, culturally-defined social events acquired by young children. Fivush (1984), for example, found that young children rapidly acquire scripts about routine events in classrooms. Script studies have been criticised because of their tendency to ignore both the influence of the social context on children's understanding and the contribution of individual participants to the development of social knowledge (Winegar, 1988). Winegar suggested that the concept of co-construction more accurately described the contributions of environment and individuals to

understanding of social events. This criticism of the script concept suggests the importance of investigating children's perceptions of school learning experiences in the context in which they develop instead of relying on interview methods to recall events. Support for this approach is found in studies of children's use of play scripts in natural play settings (e.g., Goncu, 1987; Nelson & Seidman, 1984) which reveal both the utility of the script concept for explaining regularities in children's play and the everyday experiences which can modify scripts.

A similar shift from reliance upon interview methods to the use of designs which feature natural classroom settings is evident in metacognitive studies of young children. Early studies of metacognitive development which used interview methods had found that young children were deficient in their knowledge and control of thinking and learning processes (Bjorklund, 1989). When a broader range of methodology was used to investigate young children's metacognition, evidence of early use of metacognitive-type behaviours began to accrue. Cullen (1991), for instance, identified indicators of young children's early metacognitive strategies in everyday classroom settings. Pramling (1990), Allen (1993) and Cullen (1995) incorporated metacognitive teaching interventions into early childhood programs with positive outcomes for children's awareness of their own learning. Addition to emphasising the value of studying metacognition in early childhood classroom settings, these studies illustrate how classroom experiences affect early conceptions of learning.

Interest in peer scaffolding has evolved from the social constructivist theories of Vygotsky, Bruner, Rogoff and others. Although theoretically the notion of peers guiding and assisting each other's learning activities is compelling, the mechanisms involved in scaffolding are by no means clear cut (Stone, 1993; Day, Cordon & Kerwin, 1989; Wertsch & Ulviste, 1992), nor is the effectiveness of peer tutoring clearly established (Tudge, 1992). In the present study, in so far as peers contribute to the dynamics of classroom life, it was expected that detailed observations of new entrant children would be likely to reveal evidence of peer guidance and support in their first weeks at school.

The above areas of research suggested the need for us to design a qualitative study in the natural classroom setting which used both observational and informal interview methods to tap the learner's perspective. Reviews of young children's perceptions of school (Klein, Kantor & Fernie, 1988) and perceptions of learning (Cullen, 1992) have concluded that interviews can play a limited but important complementary role in classroom studies of young children. In sum, theoretical and methodological considerations led us to adopt an ethnographic approach to the study of children's early perceptions of school learning.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

In accordance with the ethnographic focus on studying a particular culture, one new entrant (NE) classroom catering for five year old 'new entrants' formed the context of the study. Eight target children, four boys and four girls, were selected on the basis of time of entry to school. Four children commenced school near the end of Term 1 and four children commenced school during Term 2 after mid-term break. The two researchers (Cullen and St George) acted as participant observers in the classroom during the second term and part of the third term.

Procedures

A critical feature of the methodological approach was the researchers' shared theoretical interest in the social, situated nature of learning. This background enabled them to observe independently in the same classroom using a similar 'lens' on events. A second important feature was their shared knowledge of the classroom dynamics and participants which allowed them to bring a dual perspective to the data collection and data reduction processes. At each stage of the study, the

researchers met regularly to consult about procedures, data and interpretations. The dual researcher approach provided ongoing investigator and methodological triangulation (Cohen & Manion, 1980) throughout the study.

During the children's first term at school (Term 2), each researcher observed two target children during the first half of the term and two target children during the second half of the term. The first set of four children was observed for an average 4.5 hours, the second set for an average 3.6 hours. Observations were conducted in the morning when literacy-related activities were taken by the new entrant teacher. Researchers kept narrative records on each target child, alternating observations, one child before morning recess and one afterwards. They talked with children informally to elicit perceptions of learning tasks when this did not interrupt ongoing activities. Focused interviews were conducted with all children towards the end of the school term. Each child was observed for a further 1.5 hours (average) in the third term during the first part of the afternoon when thematic activities were taken by the senior teacher. The following year, the researchers visited the children in their junior classrooms (JC) towards the end of the year, talking informally with children and conducting structured interviews. The researchers observed in each of the two classrooms and recorded notes on routines and classroom activities in order to establish a shared picture of classroom life.

Data analysis

Each child's new entrant observations were coded sequentially to retain dynamics of classroom life. Coding categories were initially theoretically derived but modified in order to more accurately portray data. Examples of coding include: peer social interaction; scaffolding - giver, scaffolding - receiver; response to demands, task-oriented - individual. Interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed and transcriptions were read and reread to establish themes. At each stage, the researchers discussed emergent concepts, theoretical interpretations and decisions about data reduction. The theoretical constructs of scripts, metacognition and peer scaffolding provided a theoretical framework for the data reduction processes.

RESULTS

The new entrant learner

The observational data are presented elsewhere (Cullen & St George, 1995) and are not a major focus of this paper. The model of peer interactions developed by Cullen and St George (Figure 1) is presented here in order to establish a framework for the follow-up data.

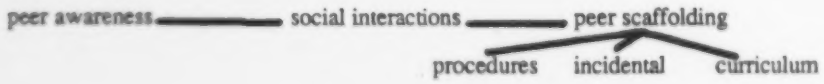

Figure 1: Model of peer interactions

In their first weeks at school, the new entrant children revealed a variety of peer-related behaviours, ranging from simple awareness of peers through to incidents of peer scaffolding, both as giver and receiver. Sequentially, the data revealed that children moved from simple awareness of peers as a source of information to accepting the role of receiver of peer scaffolding and, finally, to giver of scaffolding as less experienced peers joined the classroom (Cullen & St George, 1995).

The rich peer life in the new entrant classroom, illustrated in Figure 1, operated primarily outside of the teacher-directed curriculum activities. There was a strong focus on socialisation in the

classroom with the teacher emphasising procedural aspects of classroom life. While this procedural focus appeared to limit children's awareness of learning, it did appear to facilitate children's attempts both to give and receive scaffolding. For example:

> One morning when children are writing news stories at their tables, the teacher stops the class to say, 'I don't accept scribbling'. During a later observation when J is in his fourth week at school, he asks his neighbour C, 'Is that scribble?' C says, 'That's messy'. J rubs out 'scribble' and recommences his story.

In the following incident, scripted knowledge which reflected the teacher's procedural instructions, was used by a peer to guide a new and inexperienced learner.

> When children have finished assigned activities, they choose spare-time activities from around the classroom. the whiteboard, on which they practise writing with textas, is a popular choice. K is laboriously writing letters of her name, then starts to make a border. D says, 'You're not allowed to colour in'. K to D, 'It's none of your business' but rubs out marks and starts rewriting her name.

Despite the salience of peers in the classroom life of new entrant children, their interviews indicated little awareness of peers in the learning process. Learning as a concept was largely associated with the teacher as the following response indicates.

> K was asked how she knew what to do in her writing book when she first started school. She responded, 'The teacher showed me'. Peers did not enter into K's descriptions, although observations revealed that she frequently observed other children's actions on similar tasks and was both giver and receiver in scaffolding situations.

Further, there was little awareness of self as learner, although children were observed using metacognitive-type strategies such as checking the alphabet card while writing and peer prompts to use the cards were common at writing tables. Confusion about the concept of learning may have contributed to this anomaly. For instance:

> When M was asked about what she learned at school, she responded 'to don't make a mess any more'. M was unable to elaborate about learning in relation to questions about activities at tables (teacher-assigned), choosing activities (spare-time), inside versus outside or play versus work although, in an earlier conversation with the researcher about a drawing of her sisters at home, she had indicated a clear awareness of her role in helping a sibling to learn. M frequently engaged in procedural-like behaviours such as fiddling with her pencil case, returning objects to her bag and rubbing out.

The junior class learner

The two junior classrooms to which the target children moved the following year provided contrasting learning environments to the new entrant classroom. Our initial view was that Classroom 1 maintained a strong, effective focus with the teacher emphasising social cohesion and feeling happy and positive, while Classroom 2's teacher provided a stronger cognitive focus by encouraging children to think and ask questions and to use complex terminology. We subsequently concluded that significant similarities were apparent, also. Both classrooms provided contexts for individual and collaborative activities and support metacognitive growth. Children were eager to describe classroom tasks and learning activities associated with classroom displays.

Interviews with the target children illustrated several developments in their perceptions of learning. First, in contrast to the new entrant interviews, the children now revealed a much greater awareness of peers in the learning process. The value of learning is also indicated. For example:

> N describes buddy reading, 'Like on reads, one listens, one reads, one listens ... then when you are an adult you can read stories to your children'.

K, however, highlights the negative side of some peer interactions:

> 'I help them do their work ... help put out the car mat. There are too much boys playing that game.' A plausible reason for the teacher's focus on social cohesion is reflected in this example.

A second feature was the extent to which children's descriptions of learning reflected the minutiae of classroom life. In the following example, a classroom activity is described in answer to a question about a car graph in K's scrapbook:

> 'We went to the carpark and we chose five different colours and we began to try and find out how much coloured cars they have and then we came back to the classroom and graphed the cars.' Later in the conversation, K's awareness of the knowledge she had gained about graphs was revealed when she differentiated line graphs and bar graphs in the charts she had made.

That 'learning' was beginning to convey meaning is illustrated in the following example in which J is asked about what he knew about hedgehogs when he was showing the 'hedgehog' he had made for the school's science fair:

> 'I saw a hedgehog on the road. It was squashed cos they go out at night.' The next week, when asked to recall the hedgehog experiment, he said firmly that he had learned 'nothing - I learned something about those ... how to make wheat grow'. This seemed a realistic assessment of the learning task - making a hedgehog out of wheat taught J nothing about hedgehogs and he was clearly aware of this.

Children's emergent concepts of self-as-learner were now reflected in their descriptions of learning, as the following descriptions of learning strategies indicate:

- learn on your own, in my head
- read the words at the top
- ask someone you think might know
- a friend might help you think together
- you might need a dictionary
- you learn to be better and better
- you get to use it and then you know it
- sometimes we do hard ones and then we get to learn them, work them out

Awareness of self-regulation, knowledge of learning strategies and collaboration with peers all indicate emergent conceptions of learning as a dynamic concept rather than a static script.

Table 1 provides an overview of children's perceptions of school learning, as revealed by NE and JC verbal data. Dimensions of the perceptions are grouped according to the three theoretical constructs of scripts, metacognition and peer scaffolding.

TABLE 1

THEORETICAL DIMENSIONS REFLECTED IN CHILDREN'S STATEMENTS ABOUT LEARNING

Child		Scripts	Metacognition	Peer Scaffolding
K	NE	she shows us what to do	you have to copy off the top	just the teacher
	JC	we always read together	practise writing concentrate	they want help - to get on the menu
J	NE	it's writing she's not a teacher	leave a line	no (re peers)
	JC	how to make wheat grow	look in the balloon (word chart)	ask my next door neighbour
A	NE	I make a cinderella book; we do it	if you can't read it put a line under	H could show me; he's a good reader
	JC	she gets hard ones (math cards) I learn	a book on dogs - do they have birthdays	then they try if it's k - I tell them
N	NE	I like doing learning - reading	ask a teacher my mind helps	they help me spell words
	JC	to learn how to be an adult	complicated - you need Oxford dict.	I can spell it for them
T	NE	teacher does ABC cards	I think	they have to do their own work
	JC	we just decide it ourselves	you sound it out and it might be right	I ask them to help me and they do

TABLE 1

THEORETICAL DIMENSIONS REFLECTED IN CHILDREN'S STATEMENTS ABOUT LEARNING (continued)

Child		Scripts	Metacognition	Peer Scaffolding
D	NE	writing reading little books	do a line	teacher helped me I don't have friends
	JC	go to reading boxes and we play school	sound it out	we each helped - it was T's idea
M	NE	have to sit on the mat	I don't know how to do it	I share my rubber
S	NE	make trees and flowers, colour in	teachers tells us what to write	with the tricky ones

In each dimension, there is a broad shift from reliance upon the teacher and routines to awareness of a more self-regulated approach to learning.

The researchers' summary notes on the children at the end of the NE year concluded that five of the eight original target children (K, A, N, T, D) were gradually adjusting to school learning. The following year, J, although still presenting signs of learning difficulties, was revealing a clearer understanding of the concept of learning and was better integrated in classroom life. M and S, who were still confused about school learning towards the end of the NE year, moved to other schools.

CONCLUSIONS

In the new entrant classroom, the teacher's focus on procedural aspects was reflected in children's scaffolding attempts and views about scaffolding. Knowing 'what to do' was important for these school beginners. In this regard, the teacher's emphasis on procedures and explicit directions apparently facilitated children's acquisition of scripts for classroom life. Their perception of learning as doing assigned classroom tasks and following procedures is consistent with Pramling's (1990) hierarchical model of conceptions of learning which identifies three levels as learning 'to do', 'to know' and 'to understand'. In the NE classroom, teaching style did not assist children to move towards a conception of learning as knowing or understanding, although a recent study of metacognitive interventions with four year olds (Prince, 1994) indicates that this movement is possible with very young learners. The focus on routines and procedures is consistent with other qualitative accounts of classroom life (Marshall, 1990; Robson, 1993) which identify an orientation towards work rather than learning in some primary school classrooms. The continued focus on socialisation in the present study seems to be associated with an admissions policy which allowed children to commence school throughout the year rather than at a single entry point.

The JC interviews revealed a greater awareness of learning as knowing or understanding. These perceptions reflected learning tasks and experiences both in classrooms and at home. Teaching

styles appeared to support a greater understanding of content knowledge such as graphs. Resources and teaching practices supported the use of metacognitive strategies and this was consistent with the strategic knowledge reported in interviews. JC interviews also indicated greater awareness of peers as part of the classroom life. Earlier, we had been surprised at the limited peer awareness in NE interviews, given the major orientation towards peers revealed in the observational data. Although we cannot entirely discard a developmental explanation for the NE-JC differences, the fact that both JC learning environments featured planned opportunities for collaborative learning does suggest there is a need for teachers to structure peer learning and acknowledge the value of peer assistance if this is not to be perceived by children as part of school learning. Activities such as buddy reading and graphing provide such contexts for shared learning. Observations also indicated that in each classroom the computer served as a positive stimulus for peer interactions, for example, showing how to save a document or reading computer stories. Interview descriptions supported the researchers' positive view of the computer as a stimulus for peer scaffolding.

Theoretical propositions

The data suggest two propositions about the nature of early learning experiences which contribute to a revised model of scripts for school learning:

- Children look for patterns in their classroom life and construct scripts for school learning which reflect the changing dynamics of classrooms; and
- Peer interactions provide valuable opportunities for establishing relationships with other children which support emergent forms of scaffolding, including metacognitive assistance to peers.

Scripts for school learning - a revised model

As reported by Fivus (1984), young children rapidly acquire scripts for school learning in their first year of school. In the present study, this process was initially facilitated by the teacher's emphasis on socialisation and the work orientation of the classroom. However, the limitations of this procedural emphasis were also apparent in children's limited concept of learning.

In the junior classrooms, the cognitive orientation and support for metacognitive development apparently yielded greater awareness of self-as-learner. In turn, children constructed more flexible scripts for learning which reflected their diverse learning experiences, including those with peers. When the teacher also focused on social cohesion, negative peer experiences could also be incorporated into scripts involving peers. Children still responded to regularities and patterns reflected in script like descriptions of learning, but increased awareness of their own role as an agent in learning and of purposes of learning (to acquire knowledge and to understand) produced multiple perspectives on learning which did not conform to the original script concept. In other words, children began to construct their own dynamic scripts in terms of their emergent understanding of learning. An implication of this model for teachers is that classroom life needs to support the construction of scripts for learning and not simply scripts for routines and procedures. Accordingly, teachers need to be aware of the dynamic classroom processes which affect children's perceptions of learning, particularly their own role in creating classroom orientations to learning.

In theoretical terms, Winegar's (1988) construct of the co-construction of social events is supported by the data. The present study's contribution is to highlight the fluid nature of these social understandings as children participate in classroom life.

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IDENTIFYING DILEMMAS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS

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ABSTRACT

Over the past few years, several subjects within the Bachelor of Teaching (Early Childhood) program at University of Western Sydney, Macarthur, have been taught using an approach entitled 'situation-based learning'. Using an action-research approach, attempts have been made to improve both the teaching of subjects such as child growth and development and health, safety and nutrition, as well as the understandings developed by students enrolled in these subjects.

One way in which data has been collected about the nature of situations or dilemmas that confront educators has been to meet with early childhood educators who have a range of experience and who work in a variety of settings to identify issues with which they have to deal on a regular basis. From these meetings, issues relating to working with children, families and other staff, as well as some management issues, have been identified. This paper will outline the continually evolving process of situation-based learning, and the processes of reflection and evaluation that accompany this; and will discuss how the issues identified by educators are incorporated into subjects as packages for study and investigation.

INTRODUCTION

The situation-based approach has been developed and implemented within the early childhood program over a number of years. Specifically, subjects relating to child growth and development; children's learning; play; and health, safety and nutrition have been taught using this approach. The approach adopted is based on a general definition of problem-based learning as 'an approach to structuring the curriculum which involves confronting students with problems from practice which provide a stimulus for learning' (Boud & Feletti, 1991:21). The situation-based approach differs from the problem-based approach in that the curriculum materials developed focus on situations that need to be explained or managed, rather than on problems to be solved. One of the aims of focussing on situations, rather than problems, has been to promote students' confidence and competence in their ability to respond to new or unfamiliar situations (Tegel & Dockett, 1994). A further aim in the adoption of this approach has been to promote students' critical and reflective thinking as they consider the situation presented, propose possible ways to manage or resolve relevant issues and then suggest appropriate courses of action. To conclude the process, students reflect upon their own thinking and learning as they worked through the process.

Students involved in the situation-based subjects are presented with a scenario or anecdotal description of an event. A range of support material accompanies this description. For example, a situation describing a child's refusal to eat lunch might be accompanied by a description of the setting, including the policy on meal times and nutrition, details of the child's eating habits over the preceding week, a copy of the child's enrolment form and some observations of the child along with a developmental summary and planning information. Students are then required to work through a series of steps in order to offer an explanation for the event, based on an overview of recent research and current practice in the area, and to offer some suggestions about an appropriate

course of action that derives from this explanation. The actual process in which students engage has been detailed elsewhere (Dockett & Tegel, 1993; Tegel & Dockett, 1994).

One of the principles underlying the development and use of situations has been the need for these to be authentic. That is, for the situations to be perceived as realistic descriptions of events that occur within early childhood settings. In order to ensure that the situations developed remained authentic and that they were relevant and meaningful for students, staff teaching in the program undertook a range of consultations with early childhood educators from the south-western region of Sydney. The outcomes of these consultations have provided the information reported in this paper.

THE PROJECT

The action-research framework

The starting point for this project was a commitment to improving the nature and quality of teaching and learning within early childhood subjects that formed part of the Bachelor of Teaching (Early Childhood) program at UWS Macarthur. To this end, the essential features of an action-research framework – 'trying out ideas in practice as a means of improvement and as a means of increasing knowledge about the curriculum, teaching and learning' (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988:6) and working collaboratively with others in a process of critical reflection have been employed.

There have been three groups of collaborators involved in this project: staff teaching in the early childhood program; early childhood educators who are working in a variety of settings; and students who are enrolled in the subjects. This paper will report on the collaboration that has involved the first two of these groups in the development of relevant curriculum materials that are currently being trialed with the third group (the students).

An action-research framework was used, in that the steps on planning, acting and observing and then reflecting upon that action were employed (Figure 1). This first step in the action-research process involves staff within the early childhood program and the group of educators. The second major aspect of the process (Figure 2), which is currently being implemented, involves the students as well, who are in the process of completing the situations developed through the initial collaboration. It is planned to hold further workshops where the group of educators, University staff and students meet to reflect upon the packages and the ways in which they were used. The steps in the process are derived from Kemmis and McTaggart (1988:11) and their description of the spiral of action research.

Figure 1. Developing situations

Plan

- Invite educators to workshops about the approach.
- Establish the philosophy of the situation-based approach.
- Explore ways in which the group may collaborate in developing situations.
- Consider how situations can be made as authentic and relevant as possible.

Act and observe

- Small groups brainstorm possible situations/dilemmas from their own experience.
- Record potential situations.
- Identify areas or situations relevant to a range of early childhood settings.
- Devise situations from this information.
- Seek permission from educators to use 'real' resources, e.g., enrolment forms etc.

Reflect

- Reflect on assistance that could be available for students as they investigate possible situations. For example, would staff in centres feel comfortable discussing these issues? Why?
- Consider what issues would be raised and investigated in situations.
- Develop possible situations into packages for review by the group.

Figure 2. Using the situation-based learning packages

Plan

- Incorporate feedback and resources from educators.
- Introduce situations to students.

Act and observe

- Record students' reactions to and involvement in the process of situation-based learning as they work through the packages.
- Encourage students to make their own records of the process.
- Facilitate students' access to resources – human and material – as they work through the processes.

Reflect

- Use records kept by students and staff as the basis for discussion of the situation and the processes completed.
- Identify content areas covered by students, the explanations offered, resources used and the understandings reported by students.
- Consider comments made by students about their own learning. Discuss with them ways that this may be extended and supported in the future.
- Encourage students, educators and University staff to discuss ways in which the packages may be refined.

Identifying dilemmas

Twenty early childhood educators from a range of settings (covering the first years of school, preschool, long day care, children's resource centres, mobile services, occasional care as well as educators involved in the management of such services) were invited to a series of workshops where the background to the situation-based approach was discussed. Following this, the group was asked to consider situations that were relevant to their own experience.

Rather than identify specific problems, the group was asked to identify dilemmas or situations in which they were confronted with at least two possible explanations or courses of action and where some decisions had to be made about which of these alternatives was most appropriate (Katz, 1992). In researching how teachers manage dilemmas, Lampert (1985) notes that there are times when dilemmas may be resolved by choosing between alternatives. At other times, however, such a resolution is not possible and teachers are required to manage, rather than resolve, dilemmas. Deliberation among alternatives requires an awareness of those different alternatives and the ability to consider, evaluate and respond to the different demands of those alternatives. In other words, educators need to be able to explain situations from a number of different perspectives and to critically and reflectively evaluate those alternatives as they seek to manage conflicting demands (Dockett & Tegel, 1995).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As a result of the workshops, dilemmas were identified in four general areas: those related to working with children; working with families; working with other staff; and those which related to the management and administration of early childhood services. Examples of these dilemmas nominated by the group of educators included:

Dilemmas related to working with children:

- dealing with children who are aggressive towards other children, resulting in the possible injury of other children as well as parental complaints
- children swearing
- dealing with tantrums
- children biting and the need to explain this to parents
- approaches to discipline and children's reactions to these
- gender stereotyped or aggressive play initiated by children
- the emotional upheaval children feel at starting school/preschool
- conflicting demands of preschool and home environments for children
- children who 'collect' things from others
- rough-and-tumble play – is it play when children get hurt?
- children who don't seem to want to be involved – is it OK to 'do nothing' all day?

Dilemmas related to working with families:

- recognising and coping with the diversity of cultural backgrounds and expectations
- communicating with parents of non-English speaking backgrounds
- staff/parent conflict
- dealing with parent complaints
- concerns over parental requests to administer medication
- explaining accidents or incidents to parents
- reporting and coping with abused or neglected children

- dealing with access and custody issues
- children who are not collected on time, and where parents cannot be contacted
- having to refuse a place to a child when fees have not been paid for a long time
- families accepting children with special needs into a mainstream setting
- incorporating parental expectations into programs, when staff do not consider these appropriate
- cloth vs disposable nappies
- parental expectations about discipline

Dilemmas related to working with other staff:

- motivating staff to attend in-services or to upgrade qualifications
- personality clashes among staff
- the enrolment of staff children in the service
- judging the performance of other staff
- coping with stress
- disagreements over handling a situation
- differences of opinion about what is developmentally appropriate
- differences between job classifications and pay scales among people who have similar roles and responsibilities
- staff making judgements about families and children
- misunderstandings and lack of communication
- staff turnover

Dilemmas related to management and administration

- flexibility of timetabling and hours of centre operation
- lack of funds, and the need to fundraise to supplement funded income
- reacting in emergency situations, such as those requiring first aid
- dealing with transitions during the day
- children's responses to relief staff
- organisation of staff
- vandalising of centre and playground areas
- parents not paying fees
- dealing with salespeople
- liaison between 0-5 services and schools
- feelings that there is no real support for new teachers/directors

In identifying these dilemmas, educators found that many other members of the group experienced similar situations. One of the positive features of the workshops was the collaboration that occurred between educators working in different settings or sectors. For example, educators working in the early years of school and those working in long day care reported that they experienced similar dilemmas in their interactions in each of the four areas. This realisation promoted a great deal of discussion between these groups and a growing awareness of, and respect for, the roles adopted within each setting.

When listing the dilemmas, it was of interest to note that dilemmas are confronted by educators in many instances throughout the day. Managing such dilemmas is, in fact, a major role of most educators. Dilemmas range from the somewhat tedious, such as dealing with salespeople, to those described as major, such as reporting suspected cases of child abuse or neglect. Whether or not the dilemmas were regarded as major, the group indicated that the analysis of a situation, consideration and evaluation of relevant perspectives and the development of a plan of action based on the available information was an essential part of working in the early childhood sector.

Several of the group indicated that they were surprised at the nature of the dilemmas listed, in that they were issues which had 'always seemed to be dilemmas'. In other words, despite the change in the number and types of early childhood services available, and the change in early childhood training programs, some issues seemed to persist as dilemmas. All participants in the group were keen to promote an approach which sought to assist educators in dealing with dilemmas, although they also recognised that such dilemmas were likely to remain in a profession that focused on dealing with people.

Potential situations

The group was also asked to expand on several of these dilemmas to propose the basis for situations that could be developed into a package for study to be undertaken by early childhood students. Several potential situations were developed, including the following:

> *Parents and staff have worked hard together to raise funds to re-develop the outdoor play environment. $20, 000 has been raised. Staff want to develop a long term plan that will involve various stages and will commence with levelling play areas, drainage, sprinkler systems and a new sandpit. Moveable outdoor equipment is planned. Parents have obtained a glossy brochure from a fixed outdoor equipment manufacturer that will use all of the money raised and will cater for only 10 children at any one time.*
>
> *A three-year-old stands in the playground, swearing loudly. Another child tells her that 'that's naughty'. Some other children join the first child, repeating words in a loud voice and laughing. Some parents entering the centre complain about the language being used.*
>
> *A new graduate is employed in a long day care centre and finds she is constantly tired and stressed. This staff member tends to get sick a lot, and relief staff are almost impossible to contact at short notice, which makes the management of the centre difficult for other staff. The staff member is easily upset over minor things, and finds that she has to walk away from stressful situations. Other staff find this difficult and respond in a range of different ways.*

As part of the package developed for each situation, students have access to the same type of information that would be available if the situation had occurred within the specified setting. Workshop participants identified the relevant materials and gave permission to use a variety of documentation that was used in such settings. For example, permission was granted to use the enrolment forms, observation formats, planning frameworks and service information booklets developed by specific services. In such instances, after the deletion of any identifying information, the forms are available to be completed to fit the particular situation.

From the discussion during the workshops, one of the potential issues was expanded and used as the basis for a situation-based learning package. The situation is included in the Appendix. This situation was discussed with the group of educators who attended a follow-up workshop and is soon to be trialed with a group of students. The group of educators who discussed this situation commented on the realism of the description and the issues that would be faced by those involved. Many related it to situations they had faced and, again, commonality was identified among those educators working in different settings. All expressed an eagerness to know how students would react to the situation and a keenness to have students discuss such situations with them when visiting services for field placements.

CONCLUSION

The collaboration between educators working in the early childhood field and University staff teaching in the early childhood area has been a positive feature of this project. Both groups have felt that their experience and expertise were being recognised and that their work was valued. It was also felt that students were likely to have a much more balanced view of working with young children when they were encouraged to consider both the theoretical and the practical aspects of situations. The educators also expressed an eagerness to work with students who were involved in the process of situation-based learning, feeling that they could contribute the understandings they had developed in a practical context in the knowledge that these would be valued by students as well as the staff facilitating the process of situation-based learning. This was in contrast to their beliefs about other types of assignments, where they felt that they may not have a sufficiently up-to-date theoretical knowledge to offer support and assistance.

As well as promoting collaboration among the early childhood field, the involvement of the group of educators in the development of curriculum materials has helped to improve and refine the teaching practice within a range of subjects. Since the adoption of the situation-based approach and the development of packages that reflect the reality of early childhood education, there has been a stronger focus on students having greater control over their own learning; on the development of the skills of critical and reflective thinking; and the matching of theoretical and practical knowledge. The refinement of this approach will continue as will the collaboration among the participants. During the remainder of this year, students will be have the opportunity to work through the situations identified by the group of educators and staff. Their involvement in this process and the reflection and evaluation of this will help to determine the future directions of the situation-based approach.

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APPENDIX

Planning the playground

You teach at the local public school. This year, you are teaching Kindergarten and have spent lots of time meeting parents and family members of children in your class. The school has a very active parents group and a number of parents of children in your class regularly attend meetings and lobby for important issues and activities.

On Monday morning, you arrive early to prepare the equipment for the week's science interest centres. You are surprised to find a large number of parents and children in the playground discussing something as they walk around, seeming to pace something out in different parts of the playground. You wave and call out, "Hello".

Most of the parents and children return the greeting but continue what they are doing. Alexis, one of the children in your class, waves back and calls out, "Hi, Mrs Jackson. We are getting new climbing things to play on. They are really high and really special. We're really lucky. Our parents did get the money so we can have dese things."

You nod and keep walking, calling out, "Oh, sounds interesting. I'll have to find out all about it." You begin setting up the interest centres in the classroom when Marge, the other Kinder teacher, walks in.

"Hi, Daph, have a good weekend?" You only have time to nod when Marge continues, "Listen, you won't believe what's going on. Some parents are really keen for the money raised in the bike-a-thon to be spent on some new outdoor equipment. Apparently they have pretty much bought it. But I've seen the diagrams and it's really not all that safe. It's very high and parts of it have no railing. I'm worried, too, that the surface underneath may not be suitable. I know that it will have to be approved by the principal and by the parents group, but these parents seem very sure it will go ahead. I don't know what's going to happen."

You both go to the parents and ask about the type of equipment, saying you'd like to have a look at the design. They don't have one, but one of the mothers draws a diagram in some dirt. The equipment is apparently made of steel and its highest point in 1.25 metres from the ground. It is curved in shape and appears to be basically a monkey bar type of frame. There is a ladder at the front to climb onto it. Underneath will be sand.

The parents indicate that they still have to go through the last of the red tape, which includes seeing the parents' group and the principal, but they suggest that this is only a formality. They add that if the equipment is opposed they will be rather upset and will make a lot of noise about it. One mother suggests, "It's our money – we raised it. And they're our kids, so we should be able to choose what it's spent on. The library has enough books and encyclopaedias. We decided that they need something which was really going to be used by everyone."

You and Marge walk back to the staffroom and decide that you had better go and talk to the principal, Heidi, because you are worried – not only about the equipment, but also about the manner of the parents. Heidi agrees that there are some important issues and arranges to meet with the parents group to discuss these. She indicates that, as soon as there are some accurate details available, staff and parents will meet to discuss them.

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INVESTIGATING YOUNG CHILDREN'S HOME TECHNOLOGICAL LANGUAGE AND EXPERIENCE

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ABSTRACT

Technology education as a key learning area is viewed as the designing, making and appraising of systems, materials and information. As a field of study, it is relatively new. This paper reports on the findings of a study which sought to identify young children's technological experiences prior to the commencement of school, with a view to building on this base in curriculum planning.

INTRODUCTION

The introduction of National Curriculum documents within Australia and England and Wales demonstrates how technology education has in recent years become a key learning area. Until recently, technology education was either not known or taught in secondary schools under a range of different names, with corresponding emphases. As a result, adults in the community (Hardy, 1992), children (Rennie & Jarvis, in press) and teachers (Rennie, 1987) have tended to have different perceptions of technology education from those focused on by curricula developers in both Australia and the United Kingdom.

Technology education as depicted in national documents in both Australia and the UK incorporates a design, make and appraise (DMA) approach within the context of systems, materials and information. This approach to technology education emphasises the human enterprise associated with, and needed for, creating products and processes in our everyday life. Yet, as a field of study it is relatively new and, as a result, very little is understood about how to teach this area.

Similarly, very little is known about what young children can do in this area before they commence school. What prior experiences are needed for children to work technologically in school? What assumptions are implicit within the technology curriculum regarding the skills and knowledge children need? Is there a belief that no prior knowledge is required? More needs to be understood about children's home experiences in technological activity if teachers are to implement appropriate and meaningful technological experiences for all children. In this paper, the findings of an exploratory study which sought to identify the range of technological experiences children have at home are presented. Whilst it is acknowledged that each home context will be unique, the findings of this study do provide an indicator of likely technological experiences some young children have before they commence school.

TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION - WHAT IS IT?

Over the last ten years, we have heard debates surrounding the definition of the term 'technology'. Mostly, technology is thought of as high or new technology such as a computer or recent invention (Hardy, 1992; Rennie & Jarvis, in press; Symington, 1987). Little thought is given to simple technologies such as the paper clip, traditional technologies such as a coolamon, support technologies such as the baby's bottle or technological processes such as cattle breeding.

David Symington (1987) demonstrated through a simple questionnaire administered to 70 experienced primary teachers that most teachers think of high technology when they consider this

key learning area. For example, all respondents rated the test-tube baby, microwave and computer as items of technology, whilst few thought of an ice-cream stick, racehorse or bulldog as associated with technology. Similar associations have been reported elsewhere with teachers (Rennie, 1987) and even children (Rennie & Jarvis, in press). If technology is linked with new technologies, what does this mean for technology education?

Michael Scriven postured in 1985 that technology education is a separate enterprise from science education. However, this perspective has been hotly contested by many. Since then, we have seen many definitions of technology education emerge. Paul Gardner (1992) provides a comprehensive analysis of how technology education has come to be understood. According to Gardner (1992), technology education has been conceptualised as: technology-as-illustration, the cognitive-motivational approach, the artefact approach, and the process approach.

The technology-as-illustration approach considers technology as 'applied science'. The science content is taught through using a particular piece of technology, for example, the use of microscopes or hand lenses to investigate small animals such as slaters.

The cognitive-motivational approach also treats technology as applied science. Students are introduced to a piece of technology early in a lesson to provide motivation for science learning. For example, students may examine how a toaster works. The toaster provides the stimulus for investigating electricity.

The artefact approach treats technology as the vehicle for understanding how various parts of an artefact interact and what scientific principles are involved. For example, students may be asked to investigate a range of clocks through pull'ng them apart and determining how the spring operates, thus investigating energy.

The final approach outlined by Gardner (1992) is the process approach to technology. In this sense, technology is considered a process of inventing, designing, making and appraising. Scientific ideas are only considered as relevant when they contribute to this process.

Beverley Jane and Wendy Jobling (1994) have taken this work further and argued that a symbiotic relationship can exist between science education and technology education. They cite the example of how young children (6 and 7 year olds), when investigating small animals, can design, make and appraise a *bug catcher* and *home* for the animal to live in whilst it is being studied. The stimulus, (and hence purpose for the child) for the technological work in this example, is the science context. Although there is a clear relationship between science and technology being illustrated by Jane and Jobling (1994), technology is viewed as a process of designing, making and appraising with materials.

More recently, technology education has become considered as *a process, a way of thinking and doing by which students take responsibility for creating products which satisfy needs in society and the environment* (Gilbert, 1990:7). This perspective underpins the thrust of *Technology - a curriculum profile for Australian schools* (Curriculum Corporation, 1994), which leads the debate at the present time on the definition of technology education in Australia.

The discussions in the literature, by curriculum developers and by teachers, have centred around what is technology. However, little attention has been given to how best to facilitate technological capability in children. What do we know about children's cognitive preferences? How are these shaped in the early years by their home experiences? Do we take account of their intuitive playing in designing, making and appraising or do we simply impose experiences based on what we think is best for children's learning? What can we learn from children?

HOME-SCHOOL TECHNOLOGICAL ACTIVITY: DO THEY SUPPORT EACH OTHER?

As a result of curriculum development in both Australia and the UK, children as young as five are expected to be involved in technology education. Yet, we know very little is known about how young children should be involved in this systematically organised curriculum. Only a small amount is understood about the difficulties associated with introducing technology education to young children.

Research into this area has shown that children from Western cultures draw from a front view perspective when involved in technology education and not a plan view, as is needed if they are to successfully engage in the design element of the design, make and appraise approach detailed in the curriculum (Fleer, 1993). Moving their orientation in drawing is achievable but requires carefully constructed scaffolding on the part of the teacher (Fleer, 1993).

In addition, cross cultural work has indicated that Australian Aboriginal children from traditional communities have cultural experiences which make it very easy to draw from a plan view. For example, sand drawings and many figures within Aboriginal art work are depicted from a plan view rather than a front view perspective (Fleer, in press). Young Aboriginal children from traditionally oriented communities have many experiences with story-telling using plan view images in their sand drawings. However, little else is known about Aboriginal children's cultural experiences which are likely to facilitate engagement in technology education.

Clearly, then, children's home experiences are important in determining the challenges that will be faced by teachers and children as they attempt to implement the technology curriculum in their classrooms or preschool centres. Research is urgently needed into finding out what children know and can do in technology education before they begin preschool or childcare. We also need to examine how these experiences can be best built upon so that learning is meaningful and appropriate to the needs of young children.

THE STUDY

The research project aimed to:

- investigate the range of home experiences young children have in planning, making and appraising activities and products;
- investigate whether and/or which home experiences influence children's approaches and abilities to plan technological activities; and
- suggest ways of building on children's natural planning techniques to enhance, develop and widen their planning strategies.

The findings of part one are reported in this paper. Data were collected from children attending a preschool and child care centre. Children were interviewed whilst in their home environment. This was important in building an understanding of what technological activities children engaged in prior to or at the same time as attending preschool or childcare centre. In each case, the children's teacher acted as the researcher - interviewing children within the context of a home visit with the view to the child showing them around and talking to them about what they do at home. It was decided that this would be a far more effective method of stimulating children to talk about their home technological experiences as the motivation for the children to share with their teacher was high. This also enabled the teacher to gain greater insights into the children's technological capabilities, hence planning for their learning was likely to be better suited to the children's needs, interests and experiences. (See Appendix One for details of questions.)

All home interviews were audio-taped and transcribed. Each interview lasted approximately one hour (although the visit often was longer). Three children from the childcare centre did not respond verbally to being interviewed at home. As a result, the teacher interviewed these children at the childcare centre.

All data were analysed for what children do at home with regard to planning, making and appraising with materials.

Sample

A total of twelve children (six boys and six girls of average ability as described by their teachers) from a preschool or childcare centre in the ACT were involved in this study. The children's mean age at the time of the study was 4 years and 3 months. The youngest child was 3 years and 10 months and the oldest was 5 years and 3 months. All the children in the preschool and the childcare centre were involved in the teaching program. However, only six case studies from each centre were featured in the data collection.

Findings

If we examine the activities of an infant, toddler and preschooler in the home, we begin to see how the child's culture involves them in a multitude of planning opportunities. Whilst each child's family experience will vary, the range of possible technological activity could be quite vast. Rituals and routines, whilst not always articulated to the child, do form an important part of the child's ability to predict or plan what will happen. For example, children are involved in dressing, shopping, cleaning the house, washing, bath time, singing games, peek-a-boo, and bed time, to name but a few important processes for the child. Similarly, unusual events such as going on an excursion or to a party are usually preceded by oral planning. Preparation for a visitor, using a manual to set up a video, tune a car, set up a sewing machine, using a plan to assemble furniture, follow a street directory, using a TV guide, and using shopping centre guides are all technological activities that could take place in the home or surrounds.

We need to know more about the key rituals that children engage in which form an important part of their daily planning and which provide a foundation for effectively engaging in technology education at school/preschool. In Tables 1-3, data are summarised which show, from the child's perspective, what technological tasks they are involved in when in the home.

TABLE 1: HOME ROUTINES DESCRIBED BY CHILDREN

	Childcare children	Preschool children
Routines (general)	Puzzles and draw; look at picture books and go out and ride my bike, and go down to the horse paddock. (Claire) I sometimes get my back pack ready; before sleep time in the day I will probably watch Playschool then, go out in my garden and pick some lovely flowers. (Grace) I do drawing on my own. (Matthew) Play, a drawing. (Teddy) Watch the music box, watch Blinky Bill at dad's place. (Sarah)	I have my lunch then I go outside and play. I jump with Tamara and Danielle. (Regan) I have lunch then I play in my room. Then I play outside and chase butterflies and play with toys and make aeroplanes. (Jessica) I go into the pool. I have a sleep. I eat. (Erin) I play with teddies and play with all my toys. Lunch is after I play then I take Radar (the dog) down to the lake. (Elliot) I have lunch and then go outside and play. I play with Robert. (James) I take off my shoes to lie down on the couch. Then I have my lunch and then afternoon tea. Then I have a big drink of water and then have another rest. (Lauren)

Routines (morning)	Get dressed; and go in the car and drive; I do what my mummy and daddy says; I choose for playing. (Daniel) Put your clothes on very quickly then go to the daycare centre. (Anthony) My mum would decide what I'm going to wear and, I decide what I'm going to play with. (Claire) Mummy decides what I am going to wear. (Daniel) I don't know. (Anthony) I just think what I am going to wear. (Matthew) I think, those ones we choose these and they got Bubby and Bubby shoes and Bubby pants and um I have toys in my room and pokies. Mummy does (choose clothes). (Sarah)	I get some clothes on. I get dressed and put on my shoes and make by bed and get my bag and then I am ready to go to preschool. I look at the weather, it tells me if it is sunny or cold. If its sunny I wear shorts and tee shirts and if it is cold I wear a flannel shirt. (Regan) I have breakfast then I brush my teeth. I look in my cupboards and have a look at the clothes I want to wear. Now I look in my summer cupboard. (Jessica) I tell myself to get dressed. I wear what clothes my mum puts out for me. (Erin) I wear gloves, these are my motorbike gloves. Today I need a hat to keep the sun off my face. (Elliot) I always get up and play with my Lego first. I wear clothes. I just know what to wear, I know when it is hot. (James) I choose what clothes to wear and mummy puts them on. I look in my wardrobe and because it is cold I know ... mummy told me and I could see a grey sky. (Lauren)

Table 1 demonstrates a range of child-focussed activities. In many instances, the children have articulated these activities in the form of a progression. Most of the children have clearly expressed their ordered and planned world. With little prompting, the children have been able to outline how their day is spent, with some making comment on how decisions are made with regard to these events. The act of planning is expanded upon in Table 2, where the children from the childcare centre outline what they understand about the word plan. Unfortunately, the preschool children were not asked this question.

TABLE 2: PLANNING ACTIVITIES (CHILDCARE CENTRE CHILDREN ONLY

Level 1	Confusion	Planting. You're doing something. (Anthony)
Level 2	Emerging ideas	Yeah. Planting. Got to think of something. Don't know what it means. (Teddy) Um, I, I can plan, I can plan my train tracks and my, I can plan, playing with the train track and play which train I like. Um, I've got a book of planning about a cat. (Daniel)
Level 3	Observational	That means, I know what it means. It means doing hard work, hard work. My dad is a worker. Sometimes he does a bit of planning. He probably, does a bit of planning of work. I think he just, the only, he talks to people on the phone and plans the ... people that help him. (Grace)
Level 4	Event focused	Planning to do some things. Going to someone's house. (Matthew)
Level 5	Construction oriented	When you plan something. You've got to, you can, you can plan something and then build it and, or what you what to do. (Alyse)

Five levels of thinking were evident in the responses given. Three children gave responses which demonstrated confusion (Anthony) or emerging understanding of the term (Teddy, Daniel). The term 'planning' was confused with 'planting'. However, two of the children were able to outline that it had something to do with *thinking*. Grace's understandings related to observing her father

actively plan on the telephone. Similarly, Matthew related the term to planning for visiting someone. Alyse had a much broader understanding. She considered planning within the building process.

When planning was contextualised within a special event such as planning for a holiday or dinner, the following responses were given by the children (Table 3).

TABLE 3: PLANNING FOR SPECIAL EVENTS

	Childcare	Preschool
Holidays	We need my nighties, or my pull-ups. If I've got enough. Some clothes. Some bedtime books. (Claire) We need bedspread, clothes and camera. (Daniel) I just um, think. Well some of my toys (That's all you will take?) Yeah because, they already have drinks at Grandma and Grandad's house. Or food, I don't need to take any food either. I just need to pack clothes and toys. (Matthew) Beach. Ball shovel and spades too. And a bucket. Food - meat you can eat, rolls everything. Pillow and combs, toothbrush and tooth paste. (Teddy) Need to take ... my water, it's all empty, have to get some milk instead, have to get some apple juice and um some biscuits and um bit of lunch and um toys and oh, and I need um my big toy, he's pink. Super Ted and we'd need oh little Ted and the Grandma Teddy Bear, and the Poppy one. He's pink. Need some pencils, paper and colouring books I think that's all now. (Prompt - clothes): Um barbie, barbie, barbie shoes, barbie pants and one singlet. (Sarah)	Mum decides. (Jessica) They ring up on the phone and we talk about how we are going to get there and see if we need a car. Then we ring up the person. We also need to think about clothes. (Erin) We go to the lake. We need to lock the house. We need to take food. (Elliot) My dad decides. We pack our bags and go. He first sees if we all want to go. We need to lock the house. (James) We usually plan by thinking, we think what place we are going to and then we catch a plane. (Lauren)

Cooking	Flour. Pancakes. Flour, sugar, butter, mix it up and cook it. (Claire) Well flour. Cornflour, eggs, butter margarine. We could make sprinkle cakes or you could make cream cakes ... (Matthew) Ingredients. Chicken, potatoes, corn and that's all. (Teddy) Hot chockies with Grandma. You put milk, you put the ? in the cup and you put, and there's chocolate in the top. (Sarah)	Mummy decides and tells me that I will have chicken. (Jessica) Us .. we say what we want for tea. We have a meeting and discuss - only us (Tim and Erin) and then we tell mum we want spaghetti. (Erin) Pizza - Geoffrey and I like pizza, mum knows that. (Elliot) We have what we feel like. I just ask mum to have what I want. (James) They choose it in their head and then they get an idea and then they use a cookbook to get the recipe. (Lauren)

Planning for these children is clearly something that is quite familiar to them. Their responses indicate portions of processes that they are likely to undertake. For example, Teddy speaks in categories - toys, food and then toiletries. Erin details how the planning process operates - phoning, travel requirements and then packing. In the cooking example (Table 3), all the childcare children detail the types of ingredients they are familiar with, each labelling what they are cooking. The preschool children discuss how they plan what they are going to eat. Although the focus for the childcare and the preschool children was different, their responses indicate an awareness of planning for cooking (ingredients, decisions regarding what to cook).

What is interesting to note in each of the three tables is that planning, for the children, is essentially oral. The children have not made references to writing things down. One would expect that there would be some two-dimensional planning occurring in these families, such as writing a menu or a shopping list. However, child involvement in the formulation of lists is likely to be limited, although requests from the child may be added. In some families, lists of things to be done may be drawn up. However, only oral planning (as opposed to written planning) was mentioned in all interviews conducted with the children, except for the following comments which resulted from asking the children about going shopping:

> *I tell mummy what I want to buy. We have to write a shopping list.* (Jessica)
>
> *We write a shopping list, we have to plan what we are going to buy.* (Lauren)
>
> *We write down what we want on a list. But we first look in the cupboard and see if there is nothing.* (Erin)

There are three types of planning that are possible: oral, two-dimensional (2D) (e.g., writing/drawing) and three-dimensional (3D) (e.g., model-making). It can be speculated that the least likely form of planning that children would participate in at home or observe family members

engage in is three-dimensional planning or model-making. It is possible that, in craft-oriented families, some modelling my occur. However, it is likely that only the adult will engage in this activity and not the child. Once again, this form of planning did not arise in all the data collected. Although the sample size is too small to provide the basis for generalisations, it does provide an indication of the predominance of planning young children are likely to experience.

If young children's experiences prior to school involve mostly oral planning, with minimal two-dimensional planning and very little or no three-dimensional experience, it is little wonder that children do not intuitively engage in 2-D or 3-D planning/design work in school. Most of their planning experiences are oral and, hence, children are more likely to use this mode for planning and designing. A great deal of experience with 2-D (written/drawing) and 3-D modes for planning and designing would be needed by children if they are to engage in anything other than oral planning when in preschool, childcare or school.

Making

Children participate in a range of activities in the home where they make things. How children come to understand the materials and equipment that they use is well understood. Infants have a great deal of experience with oral exploration of materials. As the infant grows older, the other four senses are used more. By the time children attend school, they already understand a great deal about the properties of natural materials such as water, sand, air, rocks, leaves and bark and processed materials such as metal (e.g., pots and pans), plastics (e.g., tupperware containers), glass, paper, cardboard and fabric. Yet, their experiences with regard to adhering or joining materials, cutting materials, combining materials or changing materials to make something new are less well understood. Similarly, their experiences with different types of construction kits such as Lego Duplo will vary depending upon opportunity and adult intervention, interaction or modelling.

The sets of materials children are likely to experience in the home context include:

- Recreational - jigsaws, craft work, and model building.
- Home environment maintenance - garden, house.
- People focused - food, baby care, sewing.

The children in the study were asked a series of questions on things they made with their family or saw family members engage in. Responses to these questions are shown below in Table 4. (Responses by childcare children are grouped together under one heading since questioning/responses were merged - Question Three).

TABLE 4: MAKING

What things do you do or make with mummy?	Childcare	Preschool
		We can't do much because she is always busy (after prompting) Yeah, I do help her make patty cakes. (Regan) Sometimes we sweep up the Wisteria and we water the flowers and strawberries. We look after the pussy cat and hang the washing out. We do drawings, get the firewood and I help mummy with flowers. (Jessica) We make cakes and do the washing. Outside we plant flowers and go for walks. (Erin) I help mum plant, cook the dinner and make pictures and put frames around them. I draw with mummy and go riding. (Elliot) I make cakes and things ... muffins pikelets and pancakes. Outside mum helps me build. (James) We make biscuits and cakes and lots of recipe things. We cook in the kitchen. I usually do some watering with mum. (Lauren)

What things do you do or make with daddy?		We build cubby. (Regan) I collect firewood and help daddy prune the apricot tree. I help him make dinner. (Jessica) We swim and play in the water and we go to the shops. We draw pictures. (Erin) I help daddy split the wood and make a big pile. We make books and we made a bird feeder. (Elliot) We make castles because he (dad) used to make castles out of rock. (James) I go to his work sometimes ... I play on the whiteboard. Daddy uses it when he goes to meetings. (Lauren)

What does your mummy/daddy make or do at home?	They make ice blocks, my mum makes ice-blocks when Mum gets home because I'll be able to have some spaghetti bolognaise. She makes teddy bear jumpers. (Alyse) Some sewing. Mum does sewing. Dad doesn't know how to do them. He knows how to make, to cook fish fingers. He makes lunches. (Claire) (After prompting) *Making a book shelf* Mm ... he got a piece of wood, put some glue onto into them then got another one and stuck it down to the other, and stuck the two ones together stuck, um the middle one to the to the other end where the other ones are, ending and then, the um, moved another one onto the top and the bottom and then, and then, it was and then it was and then he just had to put another layer on top ... and he had to varnish it. (Claire) Um, no they don't. They only sit around and eat tea. (Grace) (Mummy) Makes cakes, play dough, everything like that. (Matthew) (Mummy) Do some jobs. Around the walls she ... painted. Make sandwiches ...cuddles and kisses and, watches videos at the same time. (Sarah)	She does the washing and she sometimes makes porridge. She makes cakes and I help her make them, I put the butter in. (Regan) He works in the nursery and sells plants at the markets. (Regan) She does the shopping. (Jessica) He makes the fire. (Jessica) She makes cakes and food for catering and she makes my bed. (Erin) He cleans the swimming pool. (Erin) She goes out, she goes horse riding. She makes our beds and she looks after me. At work she mows gardens. (Lliot) He goes to work, he drives a truck. Daddy's motor bike is broken, it has a puncture so he can't ride it. He is trying to fix it, he has to take a screw off and put oil in it. (Elliott) I don't know! (long pause) She does the washing up and gardening. At work she looks after sick people. (James) He just works. He sometimes works on his trainer, it has wheels, they move but you can't ride anywhere. (James) She usually cleans the house. She dresses me. She goes to her work and looks after people there. (Lauren) He usually is exhausted from his work and he lies down on the sofa and watches TV. (Lauren)

The children's responses to making things with their parents or observing their parents make things indicated that a great deal of making was occurring in each family. The term *make* was easily understood by the children. The children were easily able to express their understandings and experiences of making. Categories that emerged included: sewing, cooking, painting, lunch preparation, assembling of shelves, house cleaning, shopping, playing, washing, fire wood collecting, and gardening. This finding is not unexpected. Most responses related to the maintenance of the home and family, with children participating in most events.

An analysis of children's making activities in terms of materials, information and systems indicates that two thirds of all responses given related to making with materials (particularly food). The other third of responses indicated that children are involved in, or observe, activities that include systems such as routines and garden watering processes. Comments regarding designing, making and appraising with information technologies such as television, letter writing, radio, computers, books and audio tapes were heard less frequently. These areas were considered by children when asked about their routines. However, when children were asked to comment on making activities, these areas rarely featured. It would seem that information technologies were more associated with passive viewing or receiving and not active designing, making and appraising. For example, the children did not talk about constructing their own audio tapes (for stories, singing, etc.) Once again, this was not an unexpected finding. However, it does highlight the need for curriculum developers and teachers to be aware that the use of information technologies needs to be reconsidered by children - from passive to active use.

Children's understandings and experiences of appraisal of processes and products were also sought during the interviews on *making*. However, the children did not volunteer information regarding this area. Although *appraisal* was regarded as equally important to *making* and *planning* in the study, the appraisal activities were not actively pursued during interviews, as children were not aware at a metacognitive level what 'appraisal' meant. Further exploratory work is needed to develop an interview context that encourages children's understandings of appraisal to be expressed, for example, using photographs of familiar play spaces and asking children to comment on the appropriateness of the play venue.

CONCLUSION

In this study, twelve case examples of children's planning/designing, making and appraising (DMA) experiences in the home were presented. Although a small sample size, this exploratory study has highlighted that children's experiences of DMA are considerable, with most design (planning) occurring orally and only some 2-D activity taking place (such as writing a shopping list).

As would be expected, it was also found that a great deal of *making* activities occur in the home, predominantly focused on people and home maintenance. Most *making* activities related to *materials*, with least in the area of *information*. 'Appraisal' type comments were not forthcoming during interviews. This aspect of the study was inconclusive since it was difficult to ask children questions about the area.

What is interesting to note is the mismatch between curriculum planning emphases in technology education and very young children's home experiences. Given the predominance of *making* and *oral planning* experiences of young children, more attention by curriculum developers needs to be given to helping children engage in 2-D and 3-D planning/designing (and possibly explicit discussion of appraisal). Children's experiences in this area are minimal and, hence, many free-play opportunities (and teaching modelling) of 2-D and 3-D planning/designing is necessary if children are to feel successful in DMA with materials, information and systems.

As with other curriculum areas, it is important to understand, acknowledge and build upon children's experiences. This exploratory study has highlighted the home DMA experiences of

twelve children, demonstrating the need for teachers to recognise their oral planning experiences and emphasise 2-D and 3-D planning experiences (and possibly appraisal) in their programs. This exploratory study represents the beginning point of finding out about children's home experiences in DMA. Further work into this area is urgently needed.

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APPENDIX

Phase 1: Identification of children's home experiences which may influence their technological activity

Focus questions that were asked of the children included:

Open-ended question to stimulate conversation

1. Show and tell me all the things you do at home ? (I shall walk with the child from room to room as they share this information.)

Making activities

2. What toys or activities do you play with at home? (inside/outside)
3. What things do you do or make with your mummy?
4. What things do you do or make with your daddy?
5. What things do you do or make with your sister/brother?
6. What does your mummy do or make at home?
7. What does your daddy do or make at home?

Planning

8. What do you do when you first come home from preschool?
9. Tell me about how you get ready in the mornings for preschool? How do you decide what to wear?
10. What special things do you do at night time before you go to bed? What things are always the same? How do you decide what will happen?
11. There are special things that you do with your mummy or daddy, such as going shopping. How do you go about planning what you will buy?
12. How do you or your family plan for what you will eat for dinner?
13. When you talk about holidays, how does your family plan what they will do?

Appraisal

This was investigated whilst discussions took place during planning and making.

HOW DO EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHERS SUPPORT YOUNG CHILDREN'S LEARNING?

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ABSTRACT

A pilot study was conducted to get a profile of the teaching strategies being employed by experienced early childhood teachers to scaffold their pupils' learning in their pre-primary classes. Five teachers were involved and each was visited three times and videos were taken of teacher interactions from a range of classroom settings. The teacher language was transcribed from the videos and these transcriptions were coded using three different coding systems. The analyses of the codes confirmed that: (i) the teachers employed indirect teaching styles, with frequent use of questioning to actively engage children in ongoing learning situations; (ii) the content of the teachers' talk was mainly focussed on the tasks or activities in hand; (iii) categorising teaching interactions on a modified Bredekamp and Rosegrant (1992) Teaching Continuum provided individualistic profiles of the usage of teaching behaviours along the continuum from indirect through mediating to direct teacher regulation. Further, there was evidence that the goals or intentions expressed by the teachers during interviewing were reflected in the styles of interactions sampled from their teaching and coded according to the teaching continuum. Such a descriptive profile of samples of their interactions may help teachers manage their future scaffolding interactions with increased awareness and intent.

INTRODUCTION

In the last few years, Early Childhood teachers in Western Australian schools have been faced with multiple, changing requirements. These include the curricula-based changes with the 'First Steps' syllabus documents which have now become 'whole of school' projects, requiring teachers to submit student continuum ratings. Currently, the 'Outcome Statements' are being adopted, commencing at Year 1, and a trialing of K (pre-primary) descriptors is under way in 1995. The 'Social Justice Statements' also set requirements for teachers to address gender equity, respect and accommodate multi-cultural differences, and have an inclusive program for children with special needs. At the same time, organisational changes are occurring with the move from sessional to full-day programs for five year old children (K year) and the piloting of multi-aged groups involving K to Year 3 classes in the junior primary.

Early childhood teachers have sought to meet these changing requirements and supportive information has been provided through professional development programs. However, some teachers have expressed concern that the 'whys' for change are addressed, but the 'hows' are largely ignored, with the responsibility for appropriate resolution being left to the individual classroom teacher. In Early Childhood education, discussions of how we should teach, and strategies teachers can employ to enhance children's learning, are often inhibited or made vague by the lack of a precise language to describe different teaching interactions. Indeed, many studies which have reviewed early childhood practices rue the fact that, while there may be commonality of language amongst practitioners, it is not reflected in a consistency in practice between teachers (Bruce, 1987; van der Eyken, Osborn & Butler, 1984; McAuley & Jackson, 1992). While this position is not unique to early childhood education, it appears to be heightened at this level of education. Teachers are working with young children prior to the age when academic demands

provide a framework for more predictable patterns of teaching interactions. McAuley and Jackson (1992) cited David Hartley (1987:59) as having stated:

> *That is why, in the nursery school, there does not appear to be a formal curriculum which is transmitted by an obviously didactic teaching style. All that one can see, so to say, is the hidden curriculum, for there does not appear to be any teaching going on.*

It must be acknowledged that describing how Early Childhood teachers teach is not well supported by current terminology. Thus if teachers are to be assisted to reflect on their current practice and to make any adjustments to accommodate changes in the educational setting two questions arise:

1. What teaching strategies are teachers currently employing? and

2. How can these strategies/interactions be described to enable clarity in communication between teachers, and aid teachers' self-evaluation of their practice?

STUDY DESIGN

This study addressed these questions by filming a selection of teacher interactions and then describing the interactions in ways that would convey the underlying strategies being employed. The study involved five teachers, all located in the south east suburban area of Perth. The teachers were all employed by the Education Department of Western Australia, teaching in mainstream Early Childhood centres catering for five year-old children. Two of the teachers were working in pre-school centres, which were not attached to schools, and offered half-day sessional programs. The other three teachers were in pre-primaries located in primary schools, and here full-day programs were provided. The teachers were selected on the grounds that they were experienced, with five years of teaching being the minimum length of service, through to more than twenty years of teaching.

A sociocultural perspective was taken for this study, recognising the importance of the social context in shaping children's cognitive growth. Sociocultural theory argues that the child's use of tools, strategic behaviours and consciousness originate from the social interactions experienced by the child in daily living. The social interactions that occur between a young child and adult, such as a parent or teacher, or another child, such as a sibling, peer or older school friend, can generate the opportunity for the child to acquire new skills and understandings. Katz and Chard (1989) have described this as the dynamic view of development which gives credence to diversity in learning styles which can arise from differing social contexts and, thus, considers the need to be sensitive to the individual learner. This approach has direct implications for teachers. As Cullen (1994: 59) states:

> *The dynamic view of development gives a much stronger role to the teacher. From this perspective, teachers adopt an interactive style of teaching in which their teaching strategies are contingent upon the level of understanding and skills the child brings to the learning tasks.*

It is the interactive style of the teachers that this study sought to investigate by identifying the strategies the teachers employed to scaffold their pupils' learning.

Each centre was visited three times, twice in Term 1 and once in Term 2. Videos were taken of whole-group mat times (excluding story reading or music activities), fruit and drink times (to sample a routine activity), indoor activity times and outdoor activities. From each of these four different settings, a ten minute sequence was selected and yielded a total of 9 hours and 20 minutes. The criterion for selection of a sequence was that it included extended teacher interactions to provide sufficient data for meaningful analysis. The selections were made by the research

assistant who had filmed the classes and was familiar with the theoretical context and the classroom settings. Thus, these sequences focused on the strategies that required a predominance of teacher talk and were therefore not necessarily characteristic of the full range of a teacher's behaviours. The teacher language and, where audible, the child's language for these sequences was transcribed and coded according to three coding systems.

Coding Systems

Initially, two independent coding systems were used, as these had been successfully applied in previous studies to analyse parent-child interactions. The first coding analysed the adult language for indirect forms of language interactions (statements, questions and affirmations) compared with direct forms of language (directives and negations) to reveal the predominant style of the adult's teaching interactions (Renshaw & Gardner, 1990; Gardner, 1991). When learning is the central aim of a social interaction, the more indirect dialogue opens up more opportunities for the child to actively and cognitively engage in the ongoing process. A more direct style of adult interaction restricts the child to the more passive position of 'other regulation' (Wertsch, Minick & Arns, 1984; Renshaw & Gardner, 1990; Gardner, 1991). The second form of coding has been used to discriminate between adult speech which is focussed on the task versus adult attention to the child's conduct (Bus & Van Ijzendoorn, 1989; Gardner, 1991). Research has demonstrated that the child's learning is supported when adult verbal content is mainly focussed on the task in hand (Rogoff, Ellis & Gardner, 1984; Bus & Van Ijzendoorn, 1989; Gardner, 1991).

These two forms of coding provided positive findings for the nature of teachers' language during interactions; the teachers' language styles were indirect and supported children's input, and their talk helped to focus the children's attention on the ongoing activities or interests. These findings confirmed the expectation that experienced educators would interact with learners in this way. However, these two forms of analyses did not convey the strategic nature of the teachers' dialogue and, thus, had failed to address the central issue of this study. The teachers' questions, statements or directives were not random or unconnected and it became clear that, to reveal the structure of teachers' purposeful interactions, a further level of analysis was required. The 'Teaching Continuum' set out by Bredekamp and Rosegrant (1992) appeared to provide a means to address this issue. The continuum identifies teacher behaviours from non directive through mediating to directive. It is the application of this continuum as a tool to identify differing patterns of interaction used by teachers as they work with young children that is the major focus of this discussion.

Teaching Continuum Coding

The Teaching Continuum devised by Bredekamp and Rosegrant (1992:39) details forms of specific teaching behaviours which set the framework for this further categorisation of teacher language. The terms and definitions provided by these authors were applied as a means to provide a profile of the types of strategic behaviours the individual teachers employed in their interactions with the children. Bredekamp and Rosegrant (1992:39) state:

> *The truth is that teachers of young children make hundreds of decisions each day about which specific teaching behaviour or form of adult assistance is appropriate for this child in this situation at this point in her or his process of learning. To help visualise the complexity of the options teachers face, we offer a continuum of teaching behaviours.*

TEACHING CONTINUUM

NON DIRECTIVE ..... MEDIATING..... DIRECTIVE

Acknowledge/ Model / Facilitate / Support/ Scaffold / Co-construct / Demonstrate/ Direct

The definitions stated by Bredekamp and Rosegrant (1992:39-41) for each category were used to discriminate the verbal behaviours recorded in the transcripts. Two modifications were made to the existing Teaching Continuum. It proved difficult to discriminate between *facilitate* and *support* in these samples. Bredekamp and Rosegrant state:

> *Supporting learning is similar to facilitating but differs in the degree of adult involvement. In a facilitating situation the child has greater control, for example, sending a message to let go the back of the bike, while in offering support the teacher and child together determine when the support is no longer necessary. Supported learning is similar to providing a fixed scaffold like training wheels on the bicycle, which allow the child to participate but with clearly available assistance.*

This fine difference in interactions may be more crucial and more obvious when working with younger children, or if children are engaged in physical skills which have several steps leading to mastery. The interactions that were recorded in this study focussed more on cognitive or social learning situations with the physical behaviours employed being within the children's existing competencies. More clarity in identifying teacher behaviours could be achieved by moving from the mediating level of *scaffolding* to the more indirect level of *facilitation* and, thus, the category of *support* was not used.

The other modification involved an addition to the categories. The teachers would often provide information, engage children in discussions about topics, or set out behavioural requirements in advance of a situation (e.g., setting limits about how to walk to the school library during the group mat session). The information was being introduced to the children by the teacher and the teacher was clearly in control of how the information would be given and what would be discussed. This level of teacher regulation excluded these behaviours from the mediating interactions of the *scaffolding* category. However, it was also outside the precise definitions for *co-construction* or *demonstration*, and the definition of *direct* requires that it be used 'in the narrow sense for situations in which the parameters are very tight and children must be given specific directions to do something one way' (Bredekamp & Rosegrant, 1992:41). To include this important interaction in the categorisation of teacher behaviours the term *structure* has been selected. On the Teaching Continuum it sits between *co-construct* and *demonstrate*. The behaviours can be defined as the teacher setting up a situation. Characteristically, the teacher will introduce a topic and, by questioning, confirm children's current knowledge and understanding. The teacher clearly leads and shapes the discussion. This level of teacher regulation is also evident when reminding children of appropriate behaviour, but it is not *direct* as it does not require an immediate or narrow behavioural response from a child. It was this modified Teaching Continuum that was applied in the third coding of the transcripts:

MODIFIED TEACHING CONTINUUM

NON DIRECTIVE ..... MEDIATING ..... DIRECTIVE

Acknowledge/ Model/ Facilitate/ Scaffold/ Co-construct/Structure/Demonstrate/Direct

When using this modified Continuum to code the transcripts, a complete sample from one teacher, and part of a second teacher sample, were coded independently by the author and the research

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assistant. Comparison of the two codings showed a high level of comparability. The application of categories such as *structure, scaffold* and *facilitate* were very similar, these proving to be the core strategies. The differences between the coding interpretations were mainly on the fine differentiations such as whether to code an *acknowledgment* as separate from *facilitation*, or interpret the commendation as part of an ongoing facilitating strategy. A joint review of the total context from the original transcript/videotape enabled a consensus to be reached on these points of discrepancy. The guiding principle that was applied to make a discrimination between the strategies was the level of adult regulation in evidence during an interaction. The research assistant completed the coding of the other transcripts and, if faced with a real uncertainty, she returned to the video of the event to place it in its total setting.

Results of the Modified Teaching Continuum Coding

The outcome of this coding process provided summaries of each teacher's interactions and conveyed a spread across the continuum for each teacher. The nature of the ongoing activity of the sampled interaction strongly influenced the specific style of interaction, rather than the more general setting. For instance, one mat session sample may be predominantly coded as structure (92% of the utterances), while the next sample will reveal mainly scaffolding interactions (76%). Two teachers had predominant styles in all settings, one favouring facilitating interactions (49% of total utterances) while the other employed scaffolding most consistently (38% of total utterances). The other three profiles had no dominant interaction. Further sampling of teaching interactions could confirm whether teachers had characteristic patterns of interaction, as the coding did provide individualistic profiles. All the teachers had frequent changes in their style of interaction within the ten minute sequences. For instance, during an indoor activity time, one teacher had 44 changes in interactions involving 146 utterances. In this particular ten minute sequence, the longest sustained strategy was 18 utterances focused on scaffolding, though facilitation was the strategy used most often, scoring 30% of the teacher's total interactions of this sequence.

Teacher Interviews

One means of evaluating the effectiveness of the strategic interactions employed by the teachers is to review student outcomes, but such a review was beyond the scope or purpose of this study. The other important measure is to compare the actual styles of interactions conveyed through the coding with the intentions or 'motives' of the teachers themselves. To find out how each teacher approached her teaching, an interview was conducted with each of the teachers after all the filming was completed. The same questions were given to all five teachers and the responses were audio-taped to allow for later analysis. The format of the interview was developed to address issues that arise in sociocultural theory and that help to provide insight to each teacher's goals for her teaching.

From sociocultural theory, it has been emphasised that when goals give direction to the social interactions between a 'novice' and an 'expert' this creates the potential for learning to be an outcome (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, Minick & Arns, 1984; Rogoff, 1990). If the goal is shared by all participants, the effectiveness of the social interaction to generate learnings is enhanced. Conversely, if the novice is unaware of the purpose or goal of the interaction or holds a different expectation from the expert the desired outcomes may not be realised. Wertsch et al (1984) described the goals or motives as occurring in an inter-related, three-tiered framework. Firstly, there is a broad goal that is embedded at the institutional level of the culture and gives definition to a context and whether the interactions should be interpreted as work, instruction or play and structures the appropriate social interactions that occur. At the next level, the goals are formed in anticipation of the specific tasks or purposes of shared activities; that is, the intention, 'what must be done'. The third goal is at the level of operation, 'how it can be done' and gives form to the actual strategies employed while performing the task. This final level is the most dynamic, as adaptations may occur in response to behaviours evident during the activity. The questions in the interview focused on the goals the teachers set at the 'what must be done' level, to gain some

insight into their aims and expectations. The videos provided the evidence of 'how it can be done', the operational goals.

The interview commenced with a broad question:

- When you consider the pre-primary year, what learning goals do you have in mind for the children that gives direction to your teaching?

To this question there was a strong commonality in the responses. For all the teachers, the social aspect of development was a dominant issue. The teachers described the need for the children to develop independence: separating from mother, coping on their own, looking after their own belongings and making their own choices and becoming independent learners. The other social/emotional focus was accepting being a member of a group; getting along with each other, thinking about the feelings of others, knowing the boundaries of how to behave in a group. Two teachers saw as equally important the development of self-motivation, or the 'love of learning'. Effective language skills and early literacy were also acknowledged, but establishing the children confidently in their new social context was paramount.

The next three questions narrowed the focus to the goals of the specific school terms and the four selected settings of the video samples. Then the question was put whether children have their own goals or expectations when they engage in activities. The teachers reported that occasionally a child would state a desire in advance and set about the task with purpose. More generally though, teachers felt that the process of the activity was the source of interest rather than a preset goal. As to a difference in approach by a child to teacher-directed/initiated or child-selected activities, the interest in the activity was still seen as the most likely factor to influence the child's level of engagement. This is in line with the discussion by Rogoff et al (1993) that for young children 'appropriation' of skills and knowledge occurs through their involvement in ongoing activities, rather than the two staged process of external to internal planes attributed to the construct of 'internalisation'. Rogoff (1990) emphasises that the adult/child interaction is one of 'guided participation' where the adult and child co-construct meaning through their shared activity and discourse as they jointly engage in tasks. Through this participation in a responsive interaction, young children learn to manage social activities and carry these skills into future similar settings. Thus, the appropriation of skills and knowledge occurs as young children form new understandings in the process of their involvement in interesting activities.

All the teachers considered that children approached the whole group mat times differently from the individual or small group activities and this setting required much more demonstrative behaviour by teachers to gain and hold the children's attention. As one teacher explained:

> *When children are doing their own thing you are interested along with them, and you talk to them about what they're doing. I don't like to intervene and say 'well how about you do it this way'. I'd rather they do it the way it occurred to them, so I just like to take an interest really. But with the mat ... you've got to be a star performer at mat time. When you've asked them to come, when they're not self-motivated to be there, then you've got to be overt and exciting; you've got to be an entertainer in order to gain their interest - so, yes, its very different.*

The final question addressed the study itself:

- When I approached you to participate in this study, I said I was interested in developing a profile of teaching behaviours that experienced teachers employ to scaffold or support children's learning. From that information what do you think I will be looking for in this study?

The responses were in line with the stated intent of the study, such as, *'the ways teachers interact with children', 'gathering different styles of teaching techniques to enhance different learning situations that children find themselves in'* and *'strategies that seem most effective for the setting'*. Comments were made by several of the teachers that, when they were working with student teachers, they became more conscious of their teaching behaviours. In particular, they realised that many of their teaching behaviours were responsive to individual children based on their accumulated knowledge of the individual. Thus, it was often hard to make explicit to student teachers why they were doing what they were doing, as the adaptations were so spontaneous and child-specific.

An Evaluation

The information from the interviews provided the teachers' ideas of '**what** must be done', while the Teaching Continuum profile of behaviours has provided evidence of '**how** it can be done'. Determining whether there is consistency between these two levels, the intention and the actual, provides a means of evaluating the effectiveness of the strategies the teacher has employed. It also provides a test of the measurement instrument; that is, can individual differences in the strategic teaching behaviours be clearly represented? The results at this point are very promising. There are clear indicators that the profiles are individualistic and do target key behaviours teachers seek to exhibit. The profiles of two teachers particularly illustrate these two points.

One teacher stated in the interview that, rather than tell children what they should do, she liked to get in and do something herself, thereby modelling her own interest. From this example of engaging in an activity, she found children would ask, 'what she was doing and could they join in?' She saw this as a strategy for fostering self-motivated learning in children and a willingness to find things to interest themselves. Thus, during the interview she identified 'modelling' as a strategy she liked to use. The interview was held before this measurement instrument had been considered, and the research assistant who completed the coding was not involved in the interviews and, thus, was not aware of the individual teacher's goals. In the definitions to discriminate behaviours along the Teaching Continuum, Bredekamp and Rosegrant (1992) differentiate between implicit and explicit modelling but both are recorded at the same point in the continuum of regulation. This teacher's profile indicated that she used *modelling*, in both forms, more frequently and more consistently than any of her colleagues and, overall, in 8% of her interactive strategies. Thus, the profile does demonstrate congruence between the teacher's stated aims and her teaching behaviours.

Another teacher, during the interview, placed particular emphasis on making the children feel comfortable and confident in their new social setting. Quite a number of her pupils had found separating from their mothers difficult at the start of the year, and thus she was concerned to make her class a warm and welcoming environment. This teacher's profile showed *acknowledgment* and *facilitation* being frequently and consistently used, both these strategies being associated with accepting children and showing them positive regard. Again, there was evidence of congruence between intent and action on behalf of the teacher.

DISCUSSION

The Teaching Continuum does provide a descriptive tool of the style of interactions a teacher is employing but clarification is required. The Continuum has used specific terms which, in other contexts, do not have such narrow definitions, in particular, the term 'scaffold'. The coining of this metaphoric term has been attributed to Bruner and his colleagues. From their research with child/adult dyads working at joint problem-solving, Bruner analysed the adult's teaching behaviours that he considered as *scaffolding* the child's learning. Bruner identified a set of interactive behaviours that were evident in the dyadic interactions of his study (Smith & Cowie, 1991). While the list of behaviours are actions that are likely to occur in teaching interactions, they were derived from a context-specific setting. As sociocultural research has moved from the study

of dyads into the group settings of classrooms, this rather prescriptive definition has been challenged. It is of concern that the narrow interpretation of scaffolding or a structured form of knowledge transmission has been used to justify 'conventional didactic teaching, including rote, drill and practice' (Hatano, 1993:154) as being consistent with Vygotskian theory of learning. Moll and Whitmore (1993), drawing on Vygotskian theory, stress that it is the quality of co-operation between the child and the adult, requiring a mutual trust and active involvement, that is central to the scaffolding process. Stone (1993:178) has extended this perception by arguing that scaffolding is not occurring in singular social interactions, but rather the ongoing relationship of student and teacher provides for 'a more enduring dimension of repeated interactions'. Teachers are very aware of their relationships with individual students and adjust their interactions according to their knowledge of a child, as was stated by one teacher in this study during the interviews. From classroom-based research has also come the study of the impact or influence of the group setting on the stimulation of the 'zone of proximal development' of the individual child within the group. Moll and Whitmore (1993:20) have stated:

> *The above (*Vygotskian*) theory suggests that it is incorrect to think of the zone as solely a characteristic of the child or of the teaching, but of the child engaged in collaborative activity within specific social (discourse) environments. From our perspective, the key is to understand the social transactions that make up classroom life.*

Thus, the lively and purposeful interactions of children and teachers, which accommodate to the needs and interests of the groups and individuals within groups and flow together to form a classroom's life, create the *'so*ciocultural system' within which children learn. What Moll and Whitmore (1993:20) propose is *'a 'collective' zone of proximal development* ' which gives due emphasis to the richness and complexity of classroom-based teaching and learning, a complexity that demands sensitivity, scope and flexibility in the teacher's range of scaffolding behaviours.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this small study was to investigate the interactive strategies teachers are currently using in their teaching of young children. If the study can identify key teaching behaviours and provide clear descriptors of these behaviours teachers will have increased insight into their own teaching. The more understanding teachers have of the purposes and effects of differing interactions, and how these interactions can serve their learning goals, the more teachers can monitor and adjust their own practices. If changing situations demand adaptation, teachers can respond confidently if they can manage their interactive behaviours with knowledge and understanding.

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POSSIBLE EFFECTS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD MUSIC ON MATHEMATICAL ACHIEVEMENT

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ABSTRACT

Many writers claim that early childhood music education is valuable in developing skills not only in the emotional, social and physical domains but also in cognitive domains such as mathematics. However, there is very little research to back up this claim. This paper reports on a study which explored how music might provide an effective aid to higher achievement in mathematical development in early childhood. The study used a pseudo-experimental design to contrast a group of 35 preschool children involved in a music program treatment against a group of 39 preschool children with limited or no musical experience. Children were compared on a measure of early number concepts. Initial results indicated that the music group achieved higher mathematical achievement. However post-hoc analysis revealed that children in the music group with musical experiences in the home exhibited higher average mathematical achievement than children without such experiences. Further analysis sought to reveal what aspects of home musical experiences might contribute towards higher mathematical achievement.

INTRODUCTION

The importance of early childhood as a period of critical intellectual growth and a critical time for perceiving and formulating ideas about the world, has been, for the most part and for too long, vastly underestimated (Katz, 1988; Gifford, 1992). Indeed, Elkind (1986) contends that in a society which prides itself on its openness to research and on its respect for 'expert' opinion, parents, educators, administrators, and legislators have been blatantly ignoring the consensus of experts about how young children learn and how best to teach them. Whilst the research is providing affirmation of the educational import of the early years of child development, acceptance and implementation of the implications are slow to be forthcoming. Katz (1988:4) remonstrates that 'there is an abundance of research on intellectual and social development and learning that is rich with implications for the kind of teaching and curriculum that should be provided for young children. Unfortunately, our practices are way behind what we know'. Ironically, with the new knowledge about the way young children learn, an anomaly is emerging. It appears that we currently know more about how children learn than we do about how to apply this knowledge.

MUSIC IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Music is considered to be a powerful means for developing the young child's emotional, social, physical and cognitive growth. The potential of music as an instructional technique was emphasised in a position paper by the Music Educators' National Committee on Instruction (1977:59). The position paper stated:

> *Some persons are convinced that music can serve as a methodological tool in teaching children academic skills such as reading, language arts and mathematics; that the study of music can help to make the learning process itself*

more effective and appealing; and that music can contribute to the emotional and social development of the child.

Widmer (1970:33) regarded musical experiences in early childhood as 'fertile ground' in which young children's concepts can be formed, clarified and extended, and wherein multisensory impressions, motor manipulation, problem solving, creating and questioning are developed.

Music is widely acknowledged as being a great source of enjoyment in young children's lives, as well as a wonderful vehicle for expression and enrichment. It is ironic and unfortunate that music tends to be regarded as a somewhat peripheral subject; a pleasant addition to the curriculum, and considered perhaps not all that important (Moore, 1992). Andress (1980:3) contends that because learning processes inherent in musical activities reflect basic human needs, music should not be thought of as peripheral to the curriculum but instead as 'basic to all learning'. For example, research by Hoermann and Herbert (1979) and Neufeld (1986) has shown that from involvement in music programs, in addition to learning about music, young children develop concepts that are the foundations for other subject areas such as mathematics.

MATHEMATICS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Covell (1984) notes that in society, music is a public passion, a wild enthusiasm, a source of widespread joy and excited anticipation in a way which there is not the slightest parallel in mathematics. And yet, Young (1984:8) describes the two subject areas as existing in a consummate friendship wherein mathematics is the 'favourite sister of music'.

Recent research investigating the development of early childhood mathematics has been influenced largely by the constructivist view of learning developed from von Glasersfeld's work (Steffe, 1990). In consonance with the constructivist view of learning, early childhood educators portray children as active thinkers, who construct sense and meaning out of personal practical experiences. Making sense is the purpose of education; to encourage children to look for similarities, oppositions and connectedness in the sensory inputs they are receiving (Dienes, 1987). However, although references to constructivist approaches are pervasive, practical descriptions of such approaches have not been readily accessible (Clements & Battista, 1990).

Approaches to teaching mathematics in early childhood are focusing more and more on holistic and integrated processes in learning. It is apparent though that integration of mathematics with other subjects is often disregarded because of the traditional mathematics obsession with workbooks, drills, formalised teaching methods and tests. The neglect of mathematics in the movement toward interdisciplinary and integrated approaches to teaching stems in part from misconceptions about mathematics that pervade our educational systems and society. Mathematics has traditionally been taught in isolation from other subjects and is too often perceived as a discrete discipline, a separate body of knowledge, irrelevant to every-day life, and mostly devoid of creativity or aesthetics. Consequently mathematics is often eventually rejected by many students. Because of such rejection mathematics education is experiencing a call for major change around the world. Steffe (1992:1) maintains that mathematics might consist of 'one of the most urgent problems of education today'. The publication *Curriculum and Evaluation Standards for School Mathematics* by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (1989:1) conveys a similar message that 'all students need to learn more, and often different, mathematics and that instruction in mathematics must be significantly revised'.

Because music might offer a new dimension to the teaching and integration of mathematics, and because of music's dynamic effect on the lives of young children, there needs to be more consideration of how music might be used to effect positive mathematical development in young children.

MATHEMATICS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD MUSIC

Many people believe that the learning of mathematics and the learning of music are related but there is little evidence to make such convictions persuasive arguments. Efforts to integrate the teaching of mathematics with music are rare (Kleiman, 1991). Through developmentally appropriate early childhood musical experiences children can be exposed to many mathematical ideas. Presented below is a range of significant mathematical processes and examples of how they arise in musical experiences:

- Classification: e.g., classify sounds as either high or low
- Comparison: e.g., identify which song has more/fewer actions
- Seriation: e.g., identify sounds getting louder or softer
- One-to-one correspondence: e.g., clap, stamp or slap once for each beat in a song
- Rational Counting: e.g., associate one name tag for each action or item (e.g., claps in songs)
- Recognise and comprehend Cardinal Numerals: e.g., respond with appropriate number of actions according to numeral cards presented
- Problem solving: e.g., devise actions to match songs
- Patterning: e.g., explore motor patterning (e.g., using various body actions and movements to depict beat, rhythm, timbral, dynamic and melodic patterns).

It should be noted that patterning is implicit in many of the activities mentioned above in that it requires a combination of a wide range of multisensory experiences. Also, the use of general problem solving processes are required to achieve many of the outcomes listed above. In the learning of mathematics, the ability to solve problems is considered one of the most important skills for young children to develop (Wright, 1994). Problem solving in early childhood is really creative problem solving in that it requires a wide range of creative, conceptual and logical thinking abilities to combine in reaching a solution. Early childhood music thus provides contexts where creative, conceptual and logical thinking combine to present windows of opportunity for the development and reinforcement of early mathematical concepts. Research by Kalmar (1989) has reported that a group of children with extra music training provide more creative, original and complex ideas and a higher level of abstraction than those with the usual amount of music. These outcomes are considered highly desirable in today's students of mathematics.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Despite the many supporters of music education, it is pointed out by Eisner (1992:593), that in education generally, 'the value of the arts in comparison to the sciences is set low'. He sees this comparative imbalance as detrimental to education, and contends that 'providing a decent place for the arts in our schools may be one of the most important first steps we can take to bring about genuine reform in education' (Eisner, 1992:595). Gardner (1985) feels that music involves the manipulation and understanding of objects, sounds, patterns, colours, forms, shapes - all of which have the potential to refer to, exemplify, or express most aspects of the learner's world mathematically.

Many early childhood educators are looking for better ways to integrate developmentally appropriate learning experiences, and to improve the teaching of mathematics. As an alternative to the traditional approaches, music can be considered in the teaching of mathematics. Such an approach to teaching mathematics aims to build upon the natural enjoyment children derive from involvement in musical experiences. The arts have been an important aspect of early childhood education for many decades (Wright, 1991). The inclusion of an appropriate music program as an essential and vital component of early childhood education could offer an effective variation to mathematical instructional methodologies, and present opportunities to explore mathematics in dynamic, productive and enjoyable ways. Current reform in early childhood education advocates that the arts have more to offer through cross-disciplinary and integrated practices than through

segregated subject-orientated programs. The integration of music and mathematics is reflective of cross-disciplinary teaching methodology.

OVERVIEW

The study reported in this paper investigated the effects of a music program on the mathematical achievement of children who were about to commence their first year at school. The study compared the understandings of early number concepts of a group of preschool children who had participated in a year-long formal music program with the understandings of a group of preschool children who had no musical training and limited or no home music background. The study sought to explore whether there is a relationship between musical concepts of pitch, dynamics, duration, timbre and form and skills of moving, playing, listening, singing and organising sound with improved performance in mathematics concepts of relative magnitude, counting and calculation skills, knowledge of conventions and number facts.

METHOD

Subjects

A sample of preschool children from the Bathurst region was selected for the study. All subjects were selected by (1) age - all children were 4-5 years old and commencing primary school the following year; (2) socio-economic status - all children came from families with an income equivalent to a teacher with at least five years teaching experience; and (3) parental input - all children had parents who were active in ensuring their child's education was not left to happenstance by actively involving the child in educational experiences such as organised sport and reading to their child. Both the experimental group (N=39) and comparison group (N=40) were selected from children enrolled in the Central West Music Centre preschool program, however the comparison group had limited or no musical background. At the time of testing in the final months of the year the experimental group consisted of 35 children (4 children dropped out of the music program) and the comparison group consisted of 39 children as 1 child left the community.

Procedure

A static-group comparison design was used, as random assignment was not possible. Two groups were involved: an experimental group and a comparison group. The experimental group received a treatment of nearly 10 months tuition in music and then both groups were post tested. The post tested scores of the two groups were then compared. The experimental treatment was an 'in-house' music program designed from appropriate early childhood educational perspectives and based on Kodaly techniques. The program was sequenced to teach concepts of pitch, dynamics, duration, timbre and form as well as skills in moving, playing, listening, singing and organising sound. Children participated in one session each week which lasted approximately one hour. In order to select the comparison group a questionnaire for parents was administered over the telephone to find subjects that could be delimited by the criteria of age, SES and parental input and no musical background. The comparison group received no musical treatment during this period. The instrument used to measure mathematical achievement was the Test of Early Mathematics Ability-2 (TEMA-2) developed by Ginsburg and Baroody (1990). The test covered (1) concepts of relative magnitude, (2) counting skills, (3) calculation skills, (4) knowledge of conventions, and (5) number facts.

RESULTS

The results indicated that the experimental group (mean = 20.0) scored higher than the comparison group (mean = 16.6) on the TEMA-2. Using a two-sample *t*-test, the difference was found to be significant ($p<0.02$).

Post hoc analysis

The initial results indicated that the experimental group had performed better than the comparison group. However, it was evident that musical experiences in the home, as well as other pre-existing differences may have contributed to group differences. By administering the questionnaire to the parents of the children in the experimental group, an attempt was made to separate the experimental music treatment influence from the home music factor. This allowed for the experimental group to be re-categorised into two subgroups: Subgroup 1 (No Home Music group - those children with limited or no home music background as in the comparison group) and Subgroup 2 (Home Music group - those involved in musical experiences in the home). Subgroup 1 (No Home Music group) consisted of 19 children and Subgroup 2 (Home Music group) consisted of 16 children. The two groups with limited or no music background at home (i.e., the comparison group and Subgroup 1) were then compared to ascertain the effects of the experimental music treatment. Similarly, the two groups who had done the music program (i.e., Subgroup 1 and Subgroup 2) were tested to ascertain the effects of a home music background. Using two-sample *t*-tests, it was found that the performances of the comparison group (mean = 16.6) and Subgroup 1 (mean =17.3) were not significantly different. However the mean score for Subgroup 2 (mean = 22.2) when compared with the mean score for Subgroup 1 (mean = 17.3) was significantly higher ($p<0.01$). These results were an indication that the difference in mathematical achievement might be connected to the children's home music background rather than the music program itself.

Further analysis was conducted to ascertain what aspects of home music background might be significant in contributing to higher mathematical scores. The relation of mathematics scores to questionnaire responses was investigated in the total sample of children. The only questions which were significantly related to home musical experiences ($p<0.05$) were: *Does your child listen to his/her own music collection very often?* and *Does anyone in the family sing to or with the child?*

In this sample of children, the two musical activities of listening to their own music collection (not simply having one) and listening to a family member sing to them, were related to mathematics achievement.

DISCUSSION

This study has sought to examine the links between music and mathematics in early childhood. Initial indications were that there was a difference in mathematical achievement of a group of children who were involved in a music program compared a group of children who had not been involved in the music program and had a limited musical background. However post-hoc analysis indicated that a structured music program alone is less likely to contribute to higher achievement in early number concepts than the music program together with musical experiences generated in the home environment.

The results of the study indicate that there are two areas of home musical experiences which contributed to higher mathematical achievement:

(1) children listening to their own music collection; and
(2) family members singing to or with the children.

From these outcomes two specific learning factors can be conjectured:

(1) *Listening* might be an important aspect of developing early childhood mathematical concepts; and

(2) the nurturing of a *positive self image (self esteem)* might be important in the learning of early childhood mathematical concepts.

Listening

Listening to music is considered both recreational and educational. Musical experiences in early childhood involve considerable listening. However, research has not clearly indicated to what degree listening is desirable in early learning experiences. The skill of listening effectively has been referred to in the literature as 'active listening'. However, it may also be considered as synonymous with 'active attentiveness'.

Research has not clarified to what extent incidental, focused or other levels of listening are significant in learning. Whilst there is a dearth of research on what happens when children listen to their own collection of music, or when someone sings to them, the study reported in this paper adds support to the importance of listening skills in the construction of mathematical knowledge. If children listen regularly to their own music collection, and listen when a parent sings to them, they arguably could be developing the skills of concentration and attentiveness; skills considered important for the learning of mathematics and relevant to the social constructivist paradigm (Cobb, Yackel & Wood, 1992).

Social constructivist theory implies that children are constructors of their own knowledge, and their experiences in problem solving investigations give rise to meaningful language connections; and that construction of mathematical knowledge is heavily influenced by social interactive processes embedded in group work and collaborative learning. It would seem apparent that the social constructivist paradigm hinges on learners being actively attentive (i.e., utilising effective listening skills during social interaction) and being able to respond to and assimilate the auditory stimuli from their surrounding environment. For children to learn the words and structures of music active attentiveness is required. When children are listening to a song or relating to the structure, concepts and/or conceptual associations in the musical experience, they could be developing their sense of form, pattern and other mathematical relationships through attentiveness and responsiveness to the experience. Because music is so much fun in early childhood children are positively drawn to the experiences and participate actively with focused attention and involvement rather than passive engagement. The integral nature and role of listening (i.e., effective listening rather than mere passive absorption) in the constructivist paradigm is worth pursuing further especially in an effort to reveal the importance of listening in terms of 'active attentiveness' in the learning of mathematics.

Self-esteem

Parents who engage in singing to their children regularly are more than likely to be relaxed, comforting, and reassuring as positive emotional and social role models. Consequently, such interactions could be embodiments of norms for positive self-concept. By focusing the singing interaction on the children, parents could be instilling a sense of self-worth in the children who could construe the songs sung by their parents as being sung just for them, their own songs, or their own special dedicated time to be in communion with their parents, or as a special time of giving and sharing. Parents singing to their children could be influential in developing a child's positive self-concept. 'A positive self-concept is valued as a desirable outcome and as a potential mediating influence leading to other desired outcomes such as academic achievement' (Marsh, Craven & Debus, 1991:377). This is in keeping with the social constructivist views on learning which associate 'positive' participation in experiences with the development of knowledge, skills and concepts (Cobb, 1995, personal conversation).

Parents who make the effort to buy their children a personal selection of musical recordings, encourage the children to listen to their own collection, participate in quality one-to-one experiences of singing to their children and share in their children's musical experiences, could be positively reinforcing their children's self-worth and personal confidence. That a child's self-esteem could have an effect on mathematical development is not a new idea and is in accord with the beliefs of many mathematics teachers who claim that fifty percent of mathematics understanding involves

'learning mathematics' and the other half involves motivation and self-esteem - getting children to take risks and feel confident in what they are doing.

Through more intensive and appropriately focused early childhood musical experiences which seek to enrich children's positive self-esteem parents and teachers could be affording children opportunities to assist with the progress of their children's mathematical achievement.

CONCLUSION

Hoermann & Herbert (1979:7) contend that 'the teaching of basic music concepts is comparable in many ways to the teaching of early concepts in mathematics'. This paper has sought to highlight how musical experiences might offer opportunities for young children to develop mathematical thinking. Early childhood musical experiences and early childhood mathematical experiences can be shown to reflect conjoint dimensions. Listening to a personal music collection and having family members sing to children are possible musical experiences in the home which might contribute to the foundations for mathematical achievement in early childhood. It is conjectured that 'active attentiveness' and 'self-esteem' nurtured through musical experiences with parents may have a bearing on higher mathematical achievement. Early music education may be only one of the many ways in which teachers and parents could develop 'active attentiveness' and 'self-esteem' in young children but it is surely a most effective one.

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BEYOND MR BUBBLES: AN ANALYSIS OF THE PUBLIC IMAGE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION IN WESTERN SYDNEY

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ABSTRACT

In 1988, a pre-school operator in Sydney was accused of sexually assaulting his charges during 'bath time'. The 'Mr Bubbles' affair garnered sensational headlines for many years. There is evidence that 'Mr Bubbles' (later vindicated of charges) still represents the image of child care in Western Sydney.

This article reports on a research study into the public image of child care as reflected in film, television, 'supermarket magazines' and the news media in Western Sydney in 1993. Over 100 items were analysed according to stakeholder interest and implied purpose and worth of child care. Findings indicate that negative images of child care outweigh positive images and that child care is most frequently portrayed as an employment related issue connected to economic rationalism. The benefits of early childhood care and education for children and the social justice goals of Eearly Childhood Care and Education were significantly under represented in the popular media.

It is argued that these images are influencing the public conception and concomitant political support for increased government intervention in child care. A survey of the-public-at-large supported these findings. The media representation of child care appears to reinforce misconceptions about the field, to exacerbate parental guilt, to undermine the professional status of early childhood teachers an consequently, to inhibit focused advocacy of politicians for an expanded system of child care.

INTRODUCTION

The impetus for this research originated from my reaction to reading Susan Faludi's (1991) dissertation about the backlash in policies and attitudes towards women's rights. This reaction was actually a sense of *deja vu*. Her treatise about the demise of the feminist movement closely paralleled my own sense about how the support for, provision of, and practices associated with public child care seem regressive rather than progressive in 1990s. Faludi's (1991:xxii) thesis is summed up by these lines:

> *The backlash is not a conspiracy, nor are the people who serve its ends often aware of their role. For the most part its workings are encoded and internalised, diffuse and chameleonic. The force of the backlash churns beneath the surface,largely invisible to the pubic eye. Taken as a whole these codes and cajolings, these whispers and threats and myths move overwhelmingly in one direction: they try to push women back into their "acceptable" roles. It pursues a divide and conquer strategy: single versus married women, working women versus homemakers, middle versus working class. It manipulates a system of rewards and punishments, elevating women who follow its rules, isolating those who don't. The*

> *backlash remarkets old myths about women as new facts and ignores all appeals to reason.*

This notion of 'divide and conquer' has parallels in the field of early childhood education. I had written about what I called the *'chimera'* of child care - noting how apparent political support for child care frequently serves neither to expand or to stabilise the program, but to do the opposite - to deflect attention away from the fact that public child care remains residual, outside of mainstream social programs (Hayden, 1992, 1993a, 1994).

In my analysis of why child care as a public program has not, in 29 years, delivered itself from its crisis status, I pointed to the diversity of stakeholders with opposing, conflicting goals. I identified five broadstroke groups of stakeholders who had different reasons for promoting different aspects of child care. The goals of these stakeholders have been thwarted because they have been fighting each other rather than identifying their touchstone and promoting their common interests. Although seemingly contradictory, all these stakeholders are united by the fact that they benefit (albeit in different ways) from the concept of out of home child care and from government support in one form or another for a child care infrastructure (Hayden, 1993b).

The conflict, however, plays into the hands of a more insidious and pervasive group of stakeholders whose interests lie in impairing, indeed reversing, the very notion of public child care. Faludi call these the 'backlashers' and I have, elsewhere, used the term *"resisters"*. Resisters are opposed to public support for child care and think that families (read 'mothers') should maintain full responsibility for their own children (Hayden, 1993c).

In the mid 1990s, ECCE appears to be on the brink of changes with accreditation, tax deduction systems, employer incentive policies, sick leave. Some of us are getting healthy grants to review the needs for trained personnel and other research issues. Child care undeniably has more presence on political agendas than it did 20 or even 10 years ago. But being on the agenda does not always mean that issues are being addressed. As Stonehouse recently (1992:162) stated:

> *There is a non trivial distinction between issues related to children being on the political agenda, and children being on the political agenda. The former has been achieved but not the latter.*

Indeed, as Faludi points out, the more perceived gains from the promoters of child care (she said 'feminism'), the more ardent is the opposition.

In fact, public child care can be seen to have achieved very little since the hey days of the mid 1970s (Hayden, 1992). The bottom line today is that there are neither adequate policies nor services for more than a fraction of the needy population. Despite the inordinate amount of political activity - rhetoric, budget disbursements, program evaluations and developments, there is no evidence that new parents in 1994 are finding it any easier than they did in the 1970s to access quality care for their infant.

Image and promotion

Faludi argued that the media and popular culture were powerful mechanisms for marketing a particular view of women. This study set out to investigate what was being marketed in terms of public child care.

Two research questions were developed. These were:

- What messages on child care are prevalent in the media and popular culture? and
- What is the public image (impression) of out of home care?

WHAT MESSAGES ON CHILD CARE ARE PREVALENT IN THE MEDIA AND POPULAR CULTURE?

This research question was addressed by analysing the presence and content of characters and issues relating to the care and education of young children on television, in films, and in newspapers and tabloids.

Child care on television: non existent, misleading, whimsical, frightening

Faludi (1991) described how US television and movies reflect traditional families. Her analysis revealed that working women and single mothers were almost non existent on television.

> *Television from the mid 1980s has reconstructed a "traditional" female hierarchy, placing suburban homemakers on the top, career women on the lower rungs, and single women at the very bottom. Meanwhile, advertisements prefer to reflect the housewife viewer because she is perceived a more passive and willing consumer. Two out of thirty two new shows in 1990 (6%) featured women who had jobs. (Faludi, 1991)*

Faludi's findings reflect those of an Australian study (slightly earlier) which was part of this international research on *Television and the Image of the Family*. The Australian chapter was written by Don Stewart under the auspices of the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) (1986).

The study compared family statistics to the image of the family on TV and found major discrepancies. Stewart (1986) found that:

> *Families portrayed on television have the traditional conservative aura to them with middle class males in white collar jobs and full time housewife spouses.*

In fact, at the time of the study, this 'traditional family' represented less than 25% of Australian society and 60% of Australian families were using some form of child care!

The AIFS study analysed the image of the family under categories such as values, violence, relationships and gender roles, but not child care. The problems and issues associated with child care which permeated the lives of 60% of Australians was a non entity to the AIFS researchers and, apparently, was not depicted on television. But this was in 1986: What is happening now?

An abbreviated form of the AIFS study was replicated in 1993. Prime time television in Sydney was reviewed for one week in September. All channels were monitored for at least 5 hours per day, with a concentration on prime time day and prime time evening slots. The findings revealed that the use of out of home care by television personalities was either nonexistent, whimsical, or misleading.

For example, child care was non existent on *The Cosby Show*. Here the two professional parents (a doctor and a lawyer) never alluded to, nor seemed to need, child care for their five children. Meanwhile, in *Home and Away*, allusions were made about dropping off and picking up a toddler from the preschool. The preschool setting, however, was never shown, nor, for that matter was the toddler!

Child care was deemed to be 'whimsical' in shows like *Murphy Brown*. Here, while child care was a visible issue, and while the maternal conflict for Murphy was portrayed realistically, the

image of the care taker was anti-professional and silly: an untrained but warm-hearted house painter became the 'perfect' care taker.

In a number of programs, the image of child care is misleading. One episode in *Cheers* featured parents seeking to enrol their son in a preschool/kindergarten. The audience sees only a very sterile institutional 'principals's office' where the intimidated parents (both psychiatrists) defend the academic achievements of their five year old son. The scene reinforced a stereotype that children who do not know 'facts' (spelling, arithmetic) may be 'failures' even before they enter the public school system.

In *Full House*, one episode centred upon whether a Mother should accept a prestigious and glamorous job and send her twin toddlers to nursery school. After much soul wrenching, it was decided, finally, that the father would stay home with the children. (A fine solution, but not very realistic for the majority of the population for whom the need for two incomes or for whom sole parenting is a fact of life.)

Outside of the parameters of the study, researchers reported on a non fiction approach to child care which bordered on the horrific. In the months preceding the study, some TV talk shows had given air time to child care issues. In 1992, *Donahue* hosted a series of programs in which parents whose children had been killed in child care centres told their tales of horror. (An American news program called *Prime Time* which has not been shown here but which is aired nationally in the USA had a series entitled *Day Care Nightmares*. These shows displayed stomach turning incidents of abuse and neglect in child care centres taken with hidden cameras.) A major focus of the programs was the deceit of providers who blatantly lied to parents about what went on behind closed child care doors. The implication was, 'Don't trust your early childhood worker!'

Child care in film: anti-professional, negative, or evil

Other aspects of popular culture mirror the television findings. A team of researches scoured the video shops for films which portrayed child care situations.They found that popular films and videos are reflecting anti-professional, negative and evil images of child care.

In *Kindergarten Cop*, an undercover policeman who learns to control children by blowing a whistle and yelling out orders, military style, is told by the school principal that, even though he has no training at all, he is 'one helluva teacher' and can have a job in that school anytime! In *Baby Boom*, a successful business woman loses her promotion and, finally, her job because she has 'inherited' a young child - and can't seem to manage both. The concept of making use of a child care centre, as about 300,000 working parents in Australia do, never seems to enter the woman's (or movie maker's) mind. She does interview a series of nannies, but they turn out to be religious fanatics, nymphomaniacs, militaristic dictators, or potential kidnappers. In the end, the woman is shown making millions of dollars from home, thus dispelling the need for (and value of) a public system of child care.

The most harrowing portrayal of child care came from *The Hand the Rocks the Cradle*. Here, a family is punished and almost destroyed because they let a stranger care for their child. This film prompted a feature in *Who Magazine* (March, 1992) about real families whose children had been blinded, kidnapped or beaten by child carers. No member of the research team was successful in finding a popular film that displayed child carers and teachers in a realistic, intelligent, positive light.

Child care in newspapers and tabloids: negative and sensational

Perhaps the most prevalent influence on the public image of child care, or on any institution, comes from newspapers and tabloids because coverage is so broad and consistent. In Western Sydney, where the media has been surveyed, sensationalism and exploitation of child care stories are rife.

One hundred articles which referred to the care and education of children below school age were reviewed from newspapers and tabloids available to residents of Western Sydney in Spring 1993. (All major newspapers and local tabloids were included in the study.)

Of these, 19 articles were rejected as being unclassifiable, covering too many categories, or not directly related to the topic. The message/headlines/prevailing impression of the remaining 81 articles were analysed.

The articles were analysed within three categories. These were:

#1 Social justice vs economic rationalism: Did the article associate child care provision with social justice goals, benefits to children and/or to society or with financial issues, productivity, cost savings and other economically rational issues?

#2 Positive versus negative images: Did the overall impression garnered by the article provide a positive or a negative image of child care, child care teachers, child care usage?

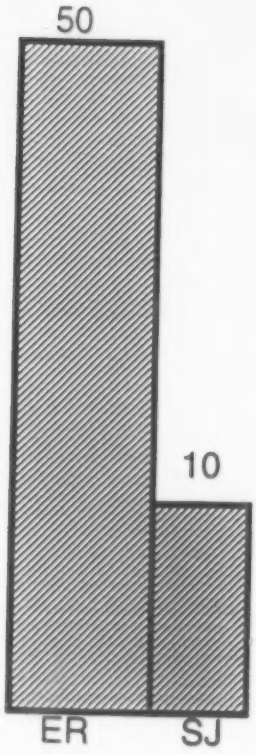
#3 Employers in child care: What is the image of employer supported child care?

Findings from analysis of child care in the print media

#1 Social justice vs economic rationalism:

Of 60 articles which could be classified in this way, **10** focused on positive aspects of child care (no article mentioned child care a beneficial social program) and **50** focused on the cost of child care, or on adult centred benefits such as increased workforce opportunities emanating from child care provision, and/or the article described child care as an economic program. (Some of the economic oriented articles did mention benefits to children in passing, but this was not the focus of the article.)

Graph 1: Newspaper articles which describe social justice vs economic rational orientation for child care (N = 60)



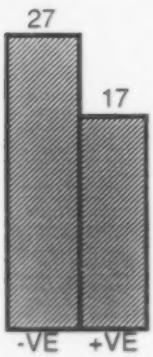
ER Child care is a production oriented, employment related and/or cost saving program

SJ Child care is good for children/society

#2. Positive versus negative images:

Of 44 articles which could be classified in this way, 17 gave positive messages such as 'Child care is a good place for children'; 'Teachers are well trained professionals'; and 27 gave negative messages such as 'Child care is dangerous', a 'ripoff' or 'harmful'.

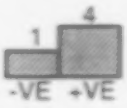
Graph 2: Newspaper articles which project a positive vs negative image of child care (N = 44)



#3. Employers in child care:

There was a surprising dearth of newspaper articles on this topic. Only 5 articles referred to the responsibility of employers towards child care. Of these, 4 portrayed employers in a positive light, describing supportive policies and 1 article reprimanded employers for a lack of support for child care. The message *when* this area is breached seems to be that some employees are providing worthwhile perks in the form of child care.

Graph 3: Newspaper articles describing involvement in child care (N = 5)



-VE Employers are not doing enough to meet the child care needs of employees

+VE Employers are addressing child care needs of employees

WHAT IS THE PUBLIC IMAGE (IMPRESSION) OF OUT-OF-HOME CHILD CARE?

One hundred survey questionnaires were distributed to a random selection of the public. Survey questions were asked orally to individuals at shopping malls, at bus stops, and train stations. Some survey questionnaires were handed out at a non related workplace. Respondents ranged in age from 14 years to 74 years of age. Forty eight males and 52 females were included in the study. No other characteristics were noted. The questionnaire consisted of four questions:

- What do you think of (what is your image of) when I mention the term 'child care'?
- Do you think people working in the field of early childhood care and education are professionals?
- What kind of training do people who work in the field of early childhood care and education need?
- Comment on the way child care is portrayed in the media?
- Do you or would you use child care for your own child. Why or why not?

Findings from survey of public at large

What does the public at large think of 'child care?

The responses were categorised as negative, neutral or positive. The majority (52%: N = 52) of respondents projected a negative impressions of child care. Typical comments from this group were that child care is:

> 'a government subsidised service for lazy parents' and/or
> 'an expensive form of babysitting'.

Over one third (38%: N = 38) of respondents gave neutral comments about child care, such as:

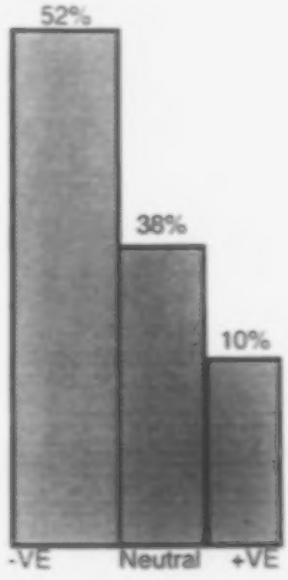
> 'safe and homelike';
> 'where children are minded, babysat';
> 'where children are taught rules and respect'; and

'a place for children who are not neglected'.

A minority (10%: N = 10) of respondents answered positively with comments about child care, such as:

'enhances childrens' development';
'enhances social and cognitive skills of young children'; and
'prepares children for school'.

Graph 4: What is the public image of child care (N = 100)?



How does the public view early childhood professionals?

Most respondents did not associate early childhood care and education with the need for professional status of workers. In response to the question *Are early childhood workers professionals?* , a minority (20%: N = 20) said *'Yes. They were, or should be.'* The majority (80%: N = 80) answered negatively. Some comments included:

'I am a lawyer so don't expect me to see babysitting as being on the same level as myself';
'Finger painting is not a professional career';
'Only women do it, so no way can it be considered professional';
'It's only glorified home care'; and
'It should be regarded as a professional career but it's not'.

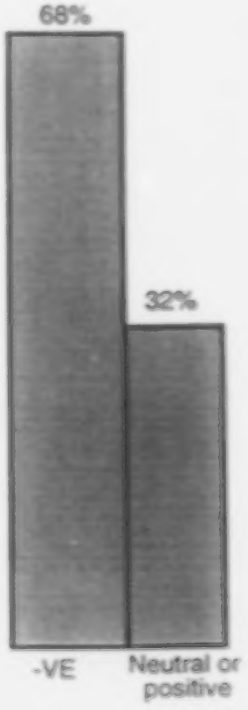
The public is not aware of training requirements for early childhood care and education specialists. When asked to identify training needs, a majority (68%: N = 68) of respondents gave answers which were classified as negative. Typical comments were that child care workers:

'merely play with children';
'are only babysitting';
'only need common sense, not training'; and
'don't need to be trained. It's not like school!'.

A minority (32%: N = 32) of respondents identified the need for some sort of specialised training. Typical comments from this group were that staff at child care centres:

'should have some tertiary training';
'need to understand children'; and
'need to know about child development'.

Graph 5: What is the public image of child care professionals (N = 100)?



What does the public think about the portrayal of child care in the media?

Respondents were aware of negative press concerning child care. Nearly all respondents (98%: N = 98) felt that child care was not well represented in the media. A majority (86%: N = 86) mentioned child abuse/sexual assault as areas which they hear about most. Of these 61% (N = 61) mentioned the *Mr Bubbles* case which had taken place five years earlier. Responses to this question included:

The media portrayal emphasises -

'child care as a place where uncaring Mums dump their kids';
'how expensive child care is';
'the guilt of parents';
'the funding debates over child care'; and
'sporadic criticisms of the system'.

How does the public feel towards the use of child care?

The public is wary of using child care. The majority of respondents (53%: N = 53) expressed negative feelings. Typical comments were:

'I prefer to use relatives';
'I do not trust EC centres';
'I use it because I have to';
'I don't have to use child care. That's what I have a wife for'; and
'I would not use child care full time'.

Some respondents (47%: N = 47) expressed neutral or positive feelings towards the use of child care. A typical comment by this group was:

'I do use child care, but only for work/career reasons '(not because it is a benefit for the child).

CONCLUSION

Faludi's comments about the purpose and influence of the press seem appropriate here. When she found damning evidence about feminism in newspapers and magazines she stated that:

> *The press didn't set out with this (castigating feminism) or any other intention; like any large institution, its movements aren't premeditated or programmatic, just grossly susceptible to the prevailing political currents.*

This can be applied to the public image of child care as well. There is no evidence of a malicious conspiracy to focus on the negative. Nonetheless, the prevailing message about child care is one of scepticism and foreboding. Child care is not mainstream, common, valued, or even 'normal', nor is it portrayed (for the most part) as being of any benefit to children.

Faludi warned that the most insidious effect of the a bombardment of a negative image of women was that the women themselves were susceptible to it: 'It is most powerful when it goes private, when it lodges inside people's minds and turns their vision inward, until they imagine the pressure is all in their head, until they begin to enforce the backlash too - on themselves' (Faludi,1991:xxii).

This study revealed that the public image of early childhood care and education which is 'lodging inside people's minds' is a predominantly negative one. Of one hundred person-on-the-street

interviewees, the majority were shown to be unaware of the positive attributes of a quality child care program. Respondents preferred not to use out of home child care if it could be avoided and did not think that training (certainly not University training) was necessary for child care teachers. Many respondents associated child care publicity with the 'Mr Bubbles affair'. Amazingly, this 1988 case was still making headlines in 1994. Six years after the affair, ***Mr Bubbles Sensation*** screamed the front page headlines of the Sydney Telegraph on March 2, 1994. Although the Telegraph article indicated that perhaps the whole incident was not as horrific as originally portrayed, the headlines and picture of the accused perpetrator looking decidedly evil, six years later, served once again as a reminder of the fact that these type of things could and do take place.

Like Faludi, I do not believe that there is a media conspiracy. However, I do think that there is complacency by professionals and others. By failing to promote a more positive image, we are contributing to the prevailing vision (or lack thereof) of child care. We need to be focused and deliberate. We need to do some proactive marketing. We need to develop an early childhood image which reflects a positive and professional and social justice approach to early childhood care and eduction. We need to eradicate Mr Bubbles once and for all.

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DADS, DATA AND DISCOURSE: THEORY, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION IN PARENTING RESEARCH

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ABSTRACT

Methodologies have been described in parenting research with only scant reference to the relationship between theoretical constructs and data collection and analysis. This paper discusses the use of theoretical premises in the design and implementation of an interpretive study of men's perceptions of fatherhood. Theoretical argument was brought to bear on data gathered from forty fathers who participated in discussion groups over a seven week period. The subjective nature of the experience of fatherhood was explicated using constructs from symbolic interactionism and individual psychology. By examining the data from these theoretical perspectives, a synthesis was created between issues which stem from social structures and those which exist at a personal level. It is argued that an interdisciplinary synthesis requires clear links between theory, methodology and data analysis.

INTRODUCTION

The axiom that parents are the child's first educators pervades early childhood philosophy and practice. Personnel working in early childhood settings require a sound knowledge base in the area of family studies and sensitive insight into parent-child relationships. In pursuing information on contemporary fatherhood, the writer was challenged by contrasting perceptions of the modern father and by what appeared to be tokenism associated with the inclusion of fathers in the thinking of early childhood practitioners. Assumptions that fathers were less skilled, less available and therefore less interested in their children than mothers seemed pervasive. In contrast, the media, popular literature and some scholars were indicating that a new generation of fathers was overturning traditional behaviours and assumptions. It was against this background that a qualitative study was designed to bring men together in small discussion groups to address the research question, 'How do men themselves perceive as well as understand their experience of fatherhood in a climate of social change, and how might these meanings be constructed?'

DEVELOPMENT OF THE STUDY

A review of the literature on fatherhood (Holland, 1993) identified studies which: focused on the changing roles of fathers; quantified the extent and style of paternal involvement; focussed on antecedents and determinants of father involvement; described paternal influences on child development and investigated the impact of fatherhood on adult male development. A range of qualitative and quantitative methodologies was indicated and, while much of the research has been conducted within the disciplines of developmental psychology, psychiatry and sociology, Lamb and Oppenheim (1989:11) suggest 'attempts to achieve an interdisciplinary synthesis ... have greatly enriched understanding of the father's many roles in child development and promise to reshape research perspectives in this area'. It therefore seemed logical in the development of the study under discussion to adopt an interdisciplinary approach.

A number of large scale, longitudinal studies (e.g., Cowan & Cowan, 1987; Pruett, 1987) have shown that research into the meanings men attribute to the experience of parenthood yields rich,

valuable and previously untapped data. Stearns (1991:29) in discussing the history of fatherhood in relation to contemporary descriptions of fathers suggested that:

> *It is beginning to be possible to have a more nuanced approach to fatherhood's history than that suggested by generalised blasts against traditions, or delighted surprise at some contemporary turnabout.*

This 'nuanced' approach is derived from looking beyond simplistic comparisons between fathers and mothers to what Pruett (1987) described as the 'fabric' of fatherhood, the complex interaction of factors and the meanings men attribute to them in their roles as fathers.

The direction of the study was further influenced by a comprehensive and scholarly summary of research on parents' ideas, actions and feelings, in which Goodnow (1988:286) indicated that 'Research on parents' ideas has been described as flourishing but relatively atheoretical, and as in need of closer attention to possible methods'. Bringing theory and methodology together in a qualitative study of men's perceptions (ideas, actions and feelings) of their experience of fatherhood became central to the project.

In addition, Formaini (1990) argued that traditional psychology has failed to make the connection between issues that stem from the structure of society and those which exist at a personal level, suggesting that what is needed is a model which serves us as both individuals and members of society. The study under discussion sought to make connections between the social and personal dimensions of fatherhood by drawing on sociological and psychological constructs embedded in symbolic interactionism and individual psychology. Links between data collection and analysis enabled theoretical argument to be mounted in relation to findings.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

Symbolic interactionism

Symbolic interactionism argues that the capacity for self-reflection and self-conscious assessment of circumstances sustains interactive processes not only in terms of self-interest, but also with regard to the interests of others. Individual conduct is influenced and regulated by the expectations and attitudes of others, and may be sustained, modified or even reversed on the basis of this reflective process (Menzies, 1982; Haralambos & Holborn, 1991). Literature indicating the meaning of fatherhood in men's lives, the shift in role definitions associated with notions of shared parenting and increased paternal involvement, as well as men's determination to have better relationships with their children than they had with their own fathers, reflects these premises.

Individual psychology

According to Individual psychology theory, behaviours emerge from the meaning individuals ascribe to experiences within the social field and therefore human personality can only be understood within this context. Three 'life tasks'; work, friendship and intimacy include all the social demands on members of human communities. The degree to which individuals successfully meet and balance these demands is a function of social interest (degree of concern for others) and lifestyle (personality style) (Dinkmeyer, Dinkmeyer & Sperry, 1987). Issues associated with fathers' capacities for adapting to the responsibilities of parenthood and child rearing, their ability to balance the demands of family, work and leisure and the relation of personality style to fathering style were able to be explored using these principles.

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

In a study of Australian fathers, multiple methods of data collection were used including small group discussion, questionnaires, and measures of role perceptions, social interest and lifestyle, reflecting the above theoretical premises. These multiple methods were used to tap the interpersonal and intrapersonal meanings which, it was hypothesised, men ascribe to their experience of fatherhood. The intention was to provide depth rather than simplification to what Bozett and Hanson (1991:267) described as issues of complexity and diversity which 'interact and intersect in almost infinite ways to produce attitudes towards fathering and specific fathering behaviour which are unique to each man'.

Small group discussion

In the design of small group discussions a 'parent centred model' was adopted, 'which argues that the parent's testimony is valid for its own sake' (McKee & O'Brien, 1982:8). Burgess (1984) described group interview procedures as enabling the researcher to probe for details as well as encourage participants to discuss situations and their outcomes.

Spradley (1979) identified the types of questions which are crucial to an unstructured interview style of research. These include *descriptive* questions which engage respondents in providing statements about their activities and behaviours in relation to the topic; *structural* questions which attempt to identify how informants organise their knowledge; and *contrast* questions which allow participants to discuss the meaning of situations and make comparisons. At the same time, while maintaining an agenda of topics for each session, group discussion has the potential for the group to re-define the topic and take the conversations in directions meaningful to them. In the case of the study under discussion, this also provided the opportunity for men to participate fully in the research processes through discussion and feedback from other fathers in the group.

In the Melbourne study, six groups were recruited which met once a week for two hours over seven consecutive weeks with a total of forty fathers participating. Focus questions and group activities were designed to elicit responses and discussion on key issues identified in the literature as influencing the conduct of contemporary fatherhood, with emphasis on seeking to 'understand the phenomenon under discussion from the perspective of those being studied' (Wiersma, 1986:259). Discussion centred around becoming and being a father, likes and dislikes about the role, reflections on own father in relation to own fathering, perceptions of fathering style, balancing work, family and leisure time, expectations and discipline in child rearing.

By drawing on a participant's personal experience, each group discussion engaged these men, firstly, in observation, reflection and discussion of issues; secondly, in reflection on abstract concepts, rules and principles; thirdly, in measuring or judging these formulations against their own beliefs, values and situations. In this process, a synthesis was formulated between shared information, its meaning at a social and personal level and proclivities associated with personality constructs. All discussion sessions were audiotaped, reviewed and annotated.

Questionnaires

Questionnaires were used to gather demographic and background information relating to age, cultural background, socio-economic status, marital status and outside-the-home work commitment of self and partner, experience in family of origin and own experience of fatherhood. Additional data was gathered during discussion sessions through handouts on which participants were asked to make notes in answer to three or four questions in preparation for sharing these ideas in group discussion. Handouts were collected at the conclusion of the discussion thereby adding to the data. Information on perceptions of experience with their own father, values held within family of origin and own family, adjustment to fatherhood, and time allocations to work, family and leisure was gathered in this way.

Measures

Measures congruent with previously described theoretical premises were used to provide data on perceived degree of involvement in child rearing, personality characteristics and values, which the literature suggests influence men's perceptions of fatherhood. Self-report measures have been widely used in research on fathers, frequently in combination with other methods (Holland, 1993). Measures used in this study included the *Perception of Parental Role Scales*, (Gilbert & Hanson, 1983), *The Social Interest Index*, (Greever, Tseng & Friedland, 1972), *The Social Interest Scale* (Crandall, 1981) and *The Lifestyle Scale* (Kern, 1990; 1991). (Details of these measures are available from the author.)

SUMMARY OF SELECTED FINDINGS

Role Perceptions and meaning

Responses to the 78 item Perception of Parental Role Scales, indicated that fathers in this study perceived their highest frequency of involvement to be in aspects of parental role responsibility related to meeting emotional needs of children, teaching children skills of hygiene, physical health and norms and values and meeting basic material needs of children for food, clothing and shelter.

The indication of meeting emotional needs as above other parental tasks in perceived degree of involvement suggested the extent of the child-centredness of this group of fathers. Items included in this scale relate to comforting children, listening to them, giving them attention, expressing affection towards children, providing them with emotional support, h[illegible]ing them and making them feel important. These tasks allude to the highly expressive aspects o[illegible]arenthood and responses indicated that these men perceived themselves as being more involved in meeting the affective, nurturing needs of their children than in other parental tasks. Reporting of a high level of participation in the affective domains of parenting was reflected in discussion outcomes relating to attitudes and beliefs which indicated these aspects of adult/child interaction as highly valued aspects of being a father. The wish to be much more emotionally supportive and responsive to their children than they remember their own fathers being with them also emerged as a significant factor in discussion data.

These selected findings suggest that, to a degree, fathers are engaging in a process of reflection associated with modification and change in the definitions of their role based on experience with their own fathers and an emerging sense of the psychological and social magnitude of their role in relation to children's lives. The commitment to have greater involvement with their children than they recall their own fathers having with them was strongly articulated in discussion groups. Men in the groups discussed strategies which they employed to achieve their intentions for closer family relationships, many of which involved career decisions, life style changes, significant negotiation and compromise.

Social Interest and fatherhood

Outcomes from the Social Interest Scale, which measures the degree to which respondents value interest in and concern for others, indicated that 70% of the total sample held values congruent with high social interest, while 30% held values associated with low social interest, suggesting that the majority tended to value cooperative and altruistic behaviours. The extent to which the values construct being measured moderated these men's perceptions of fatherhood was suggested in the discussion outcomes. Commonality of concerns associated with cognitive-affective domains and indications of the primacy of fatherhood in the lives of these men emerged in group interactions.

Responses to focus questions: 'What's it like being a father?; What do you like most/least?; What would you like to change?; What do you want to do differently from your own father/what do you

want to do the same?' indicated that fatherhood was a highly emotionally charged experience, one which created a sense of belonging, closeness, a sense of connectedness to other parents and children but, at the same time, fear, anguish and uncertainty. Emotions associated with the birth of each child were described as intense, unexpected, amazing, unforgettable. While expressing some ambivalence about the awesome responsibility of fatherhood, all participants saw it as a milestone in adult life, enhancing but also challenging their self-perception.

Most liked aspects of fatherhood in descending order of frequency were indicated as sharing affection and experiences with their children, children's dependence on them and feeling needed, watching children develop, teaching children and seeing children's achievements. Most disliked aspects of the role were reported overwhelmingly as those associated with discipline and/or lack of time and the impact of these issues on their relationships with children.

These findings emphasise the theoretical principles associated with social interest which relate to the unique capacity of humans for the expression of a principle of value congruent with positive, integrative behaviours (Crandall, 1981). Discussion responses from men in this study indicated satisfaction within the social task of fathering which created closeness and dissatisfaction with those associated with disruption of relationships. The capacity of fatherhood to elicit in men their potential for nurturance, other-centredness and valuing experiences that go beyond the self was evident.

Social Interest and the Life tasks

Results from the Social Interest Index, which indicates the degree of social interest associated with meeting the demands of the three life tasks, work, friendship and intimacy, revealed 70% of participants scored low and 30% scored high on this index. Results confirmed what most fathers in the study reported: that issues relating to the three life tasks were experienced as problematic, particularly in relation to balancing work, family and leisure demands and the allocation of time. They not only described these task demands as a source of continuing conflict but also in terms of their negative impact on children, partners and themselves.

One group discussion session was allocated to the exploration of individual use of time and its implications for family life. An exercise was used to assist these fathers to look at the way in which they allocated time to the various tasks required of them in the conduct of their daily lives and to explore ways they might change things if they wished. The 'Eggs-in-a-basket' exercise (Graeme Russell, *personal communication*, September 1990) required participants to distribute 20 pebbles across five areas: work time, individual time with children, time as a couple, time as a family and personal time to indicate how they perceived time spent in each of these domains.

Overall and predictably, these men allocated the largest amount of time to work, around 40%. The next highest allocation was around half that; 20% was given to family time. Individual time with children was less than family time and averaged around 15%, although some had difficulty differentiating between the two and saw them as equal. Others, however, having not considered this aspect of time allocation, perceived their time with children individually as lower. In nearly all cases, personal and couple time had the least time allocation, averaging between 5% and 10%.

These findings suggest why scores on the Social Interest Scale were the reverse of those on the Social Interest Index. It is reasonable to conclude that the balancing of life tasks is challenging and difficult for many fathers to achieve regardless of their values and preferences. This created much of the tension experienced by these men in meeting the demands of family living, suggesting that the intentions for more commitment to involved fatherhood in the lives of these men continues to be overshadowed by the dominance of work.

Lifestyle and fathering style

Lifestyle describes characteristic patterns or styles of conduct which give unity and purpose to behaviour. Typical personality styles are described by Kern (1990) as perfectionist, controller, need-to-please, victim and martyr. Briefly summarised, lifestyle priorities in the total group of fathers as measured by the Lifestyle Scale were indicated as 40% Perfectionist; 17.5% Control; 15% Pleaser; 22.5% Victim and 12.5% Martyr.

The representation of Perfectionist lifestyle as almost twice any other priority was not surprising given that these subjects volunteered to participate in the study and were therefore likely to have a high commitment to fathering and possibly high standards for themselves as fathers reflective of this lifestyle category. Some perfectionist lifestyles created dissatisfaction in the fathering role as demands and expectations of self, children and partners tended to be excessively high and, therefore, unachievable in the face of other life demands. At the same time, this lifestyle priority engaged some fathers in pursuing an ideal for fatherhood consistent with creative, thoughtful, cooperative and integrative styles of involved fathering.

Victim lifestyle responses were indicated in feelings of being dominated by events outside the family. This was associated with a sense of having little control over these undesirable and difficult influences, particularly in relation to children's life directions. At the same time, this lifestyle characteristic engaged some fathers in the maintenance of family relationships in ways which they believed balanced injustices and moderated external influences. This was expressed by some in a strong desire to avoid victimisation in family relationships. This was also associated with attempts to develop the self-esteem in children which they perceived as having themselves struggled to maintain in the face of destructive relationships with their own fathers or siblings.

The lifestyle priority of control was indicated in discussion about decision making and discipline in the family, particularly the need to win in conflict situations. The extent to which fathers believed they should dominate and control events in family life and within other life tasks provided insight into frustration with, and resistance to, change. Controlling personalities also indicated fathering preferences which sought to maintain a constructive level of order in family life, particularly in monitoring children's needs and the utilisation of time.

The need-to-please lifestyle was less dominant in the group and was evident in participants who described being motivated by a desire to keep all family members as happy as possible. Meeting the needs of children and partners was a high priority but this was also indicated as being at a cost. The sense of being swamped by the desire to please was expressed as well as a sense of guilt when the goal was not achieved.

Martyr lifestyle characteristics provided insight into the experiences of a few in the group who described the tasks of fatherhood as excessively demanding on top of other, equally unavoidable demands. Expressions of being unable to meet the expectations of the new, highly involved father were associated with this lifestyle and included being critical of self and others. At the same time, these individuals expressed a strong desire to evidence many of the characteristics of the highly nurturant father.

Within individual personality, lifestyle priorities provide a theme for human conduct and therefore an indication of parenting style. Lifestyle originates in the cultural and social matrix of the family of origin, particularly the behavioural models of parents and is an aspect of the way in which individuals understand events as well as ascribe and interpret meanings within social groups. Fathers in this study indicated attitudes and behaviours indicative of personality priorities which may assist or work against the adoption of a more involved father role. Values congruent with high or low social interest moderate between lifestyle characteristics and conduct to the extent that personality will be helpful or unhelpful within family relationships, increase or decrease satisfaction with role performance.

CONCLUSION

This paper has indicated, in summary form, the way in which constructs from symbolic interactionism and individual psychology can be utilised to explore men's perceptions of fatherhood, addressing concerns about atheoretical approaches to parenting research and the argument that traditional psychological approaches disregard the social issues in the understanding of human conduct.

Within descriptions of theoretical premises, connections have been articulated between individual responses at a social, interpersonal level and those at a psychological, intrapersonal level. Symbolic interactionism argues the social embeddedness of human experience, that experiences can only be understood through the meanings attributed to them and that change is a function of the human capacity for self-reflection and self-conscious assessment of circumstances. Individual psychology offers constructs which indicate psychological processes as socially influenced, beginning in the family of origin and emerging as personality characteristics and values. The relevance of these constructs to investigations of fatherhood had been indicated in previous research.

The design of the study enabled a synthesis to be established between theory, methodology and data interpretation. The range of data collection methods enabled interpretation of the meaning men attribute to the tasks and experiences of fatherhood to be explored through theoretical constructs. This research suggests that studies of fathers' perceptions of their experience of parenthood using an interdisciplinary approach can broaden existing narrow conceptions of men's roles and avoid the creation of a replacement stereotype for fatherhood. The described methodology could be used to further explore the meanings partners and children attribute to fathers' conduct and the extent to which meanings are created intrapersonally and shared interpersonally within the fabric of the family.

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STAFF SUPERVISION IN LONG DAY CARE CENTRES IN NEW SOUTH WALES

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ABSTRACT

Staff supervision, now mandated by state regulations as the responsibility of the authorised supervisor in centre-based child care services, manifests itself in many forms. Strategies used to supervise staff in order to enhance and promote professional development were the focus of a study in which child care centre Directors in New South Wales were surveyed. A number of variables was analysed in order to determine factors in the workplace that impact on the ability of the Director to undertake supervision and also the nature of the supervision task. Variables including management structure, centre size, number and qualifications of staff employed, title of the Director and allocation of release time were not found to be significant in relation to the nature and style of supervision.

INTRODUCTION

While current NSW centre-based services regulations mandate that the 'authorised supervisor' (the Director) undertakes supervision and ongoing professional development of staff, no direct provision is made to support Directors in attaining or developing supervisory skills. Implicit, then, is the assumption that Directors already possess such skills or are able to readily access resources to develop these skills.

WHAT IS SUPERVISION?

Effective supervision has been identified as a key factor in the development and maintenance of a positive working environment that is able to take into account the needs of the individual as well as the needs of the organisation (Hegland, 1984; Catron & Kendall, 1984; Katz, 1979).

The study of supervision constitutes a specialised body of knowledge that relates theories of supervision to specific supervisory practice. There is an extensive body of knowledge relating to general issues of supervision. Debate exists about the perceived and actual purpose of supervision. The term 'supervision' is often interchanged with terms such as 'professional development', 'evaluation' and 'staff appraisal'. Leadership, organisational commitment and the availability of resources have been identified as significant factors in supervisory practice. Attitudes and beliefs about the nature of supervision from both a personal and organisational perspective underpin supervisory practice.

In early childhood settings, the intensity of the relationships between staff, children and parents, as well as the nature of care and education of very young children, constitutes a unique working environment that requires the supervisor to have specialised skills and to utilise a range of supervision strategies to meet the needs of the diverse range of staff employed in centre-based services (Clyde & Ebbeck, 1988).

'Supervision' is a term used in a variety of work environments. Its application in the workplace may vary greatly from a technique which presupposes a hierarchy of power and knowledge to one of collaboration and empowerment. The primary function of supervision may be as a means of monitoring and measuring staff performance based on a set of minimum acceptable criteria, with conformity and collective performance being of paramount importance. Alternatively, it may serve

as an open-ended function with an emphasis on the professional development of staff based on individual needs. Effective supervision which leads to positive growth in the area of professional development must focus on enhancing existing competencies while, at the same time, extending and challenging existing practice.

The proclamation of the NSW Children (Care and Protection) Act, 1987, and the subsequent introduction of the Centre-Based Services Regulations resulted in the mandating of ongoing supervision and professional development for staff in early childhood settings licensed by the state Department of Community Services (DOCS).

> *Under the terms of the Children (Care and Protection) Act, 1987, the Authorised Supervisor (Director) of a centre-based child care service shall: (5) Assist with the recruitment, selection and training of appropriate staff for the service and provide ongoing support, supervision and professional development for all staff members.*
>
> (Centre-Based Services Regulations, p44)

Staff supervision, a complex and often stressful task, is clearly, then, the responsibility of the Director (Authorised Supervisor). This is a challenge to Directors who already must carry out a diverse range of demanding tasks. The Director may or may not possess the necessary skills to competently supervise staff whose training, background and experiences may vary tremendously (Caruso & Fawcett, 1986; Hegland, 1984). Supervision is clearly linked in the Regulations to 'professional development'. To what extent supervision is used to promote and enhance professional development needs to be addressed in the context of the realities of teaching and working in centre-based services.

ISSUES OF SUPERVISION IN EARLY CHILDHOOD SETTINGS

Elements that are vital to the provision of quality care in early childhood settings have been extensively documented and highlight the quality and commitment of staff as a critical component of quality care. It follows, then, that supervision and subsequent professional development of staff are essential to the ongoing provision of quality early childhood programs.

Existing models of teacher supervision, with a focus on the structured, formal school system, bear little resemblance in philosophy and context to the less formal setting of a child care centre (Vartuli & Fyfe, 1993). There is a number of unique features of the early childhood setting that impact on the nature and practice of supervision in early childhood.

- Lack of clearly defined hierarchical roles. The practice of teamwork in the early childhood setting often results in a blurring of roles so that clear lines of responsibility are not established.

- Lack of role clarity for Director as a supervisor. Related to the blurring of roles is a lack of clarity for the Director in terms of supervisory roles and practice. Balancing between the role of teacher and the role of Director, supervision becomes a somewhat precarious task as the Director moves between working as a peer alongside staff to a supervisor whose task is to monitor and evaluate staff performance (Caruso, 1991).

- Diversity of team and curriculum. Unlike a formal school setting, where there is some consistency in the level of training and uniformity in the curriculum which teachers deliver, early childhood services are characterised by diversity of staffing and curriculum design.

- Lack of release time for both Director and staff to participate in supervision. Time, a critical factor in all supervision models, is perhaps most critical in the early childhood setting. It is more common for Directors to be designated 'Teacher-Director' than Non-Teaching Director

(LECS, 1992). This, combined with centre-based services' regulations in relation to staff: child ratios, means that obtaining release time from teaching is an ongoing dilemma. The current practice of employing Teacher-Directors obviously presents a very real barrier to the provision of effective staff supervision.

- Lack of a suitable model of supervision aimed at the early childhood setting.
- Lack of adequate training in supervision skills (Caruso, 1991; Caruso & Fawcett, 1986).

THE CONTEXT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES

Much of the recent work relating to models of teacher supervision focuses on the organisational setting of schools where historical issues of conformity, bureaucracy and top-down management have a significant impact on supervision strategies and practices. In order to fully understand the challenges of supervision facing the Director, it is necessary to consider the context in which supervision must take place (Whelan, 1993).

Multiple Staffing

The term 'multiple staffing' refers to the range of staff found within the early childhood setting who possess a variety of qualifications, training and experience related to the care and education of young children. A unique feature of multiple staffing is the lack of a clear definition of roles within the setting that commonly leads to a blurring and overlapping of roles. This lack of role clarity poses unique problems, particularly in terms of the interrelationship between professional status, personal and professional commitment and curriculum practice (Ebbeck, 1991; McNairy, 1988; Johnston, 1984). Equally complex are the planning, delivery and implementation of supervision for staff whose roles, training, experience and socio-cultural backgrounds are extremely diverse (Veale, 1991; Jorde-Bloom, 1988; McNairy, 1988).

Role Diversity and the Concept of Professionalism

The early childhood industry is perhaps one of the few workplaces where roles are not clearly defined and where the very complex nature of the work results in a great deal of overlap of the various existing roles. Ebbeck (1991) argues that this lack of clarity in relation to roles results in an erosion, rather than a strengthening, of the early childhood profession. The concept of teamwork has suffered because of this confusion in roles. Ebbeck and Clyde (1988) equate this loss of professional identity with the lack of clarity in relation to the differing roles and expectations of staff in the diverse range of early childhood settings. One of the factors that serve to set early childhood professionals apart from other professional groups is not the lack of professional training but the ongoing difficulty experienced by early childhood professionals in promoting themselves professionally. The sharing of roles reinforces the notion that working in an early childhood setting is something that almost anyone can undertake. Therefore, staff supervision must be implemented in such a way that it promotes the skills and knowledge base of early childhood professionals (Powell, 1982).

The Concept of Teamwork

The constant tendency to interchange roles within the team indicates the range and complexities of tasks to be undertaken and implies, in part, a lack of respect for roles within the organisation both as individuals and as collective members of a team. Caruso and Fawcett (1986) have found that role sharing can become a source of resentment among staff whose working conditions are of a lesser quality than that of the teacher.

Supervision can address this problem. The practice of task sharing has contributed to the loss of identity and lack of clearly defined roles within early childhood settings. Misunderstanding of the

concept and nature of teamwork has the potential to result in resentment, tension and an unwillingness to address professional issues. In the early childhood setting, this issue is further compounded by existing inequities in wages and conditions and the diversity of experience and qualifications found within early childhood settings.

It is essential to understand the context of children's services in order to fully explore issues relating to staff supervision in long day care. Constraints of access to resources and limited availability of time to devote to supervision are realities that shape supervisory practice. Research relating specifically to supervision issues and practices in precompulsory early childhood settings is limited. In order to promote effective supervision strategies, it is necessary to determine current supervisory practices as well as issues of concern to supervisors in the early childhood field.

METHOD

A postal survey of randomly selected long day care services in NSW was used for the research methodology. The questionnaires were distributed to metropolitan, rural and semi-rural areas of NSW. Each questionnaire contained 129 items and was developed as a result of a review of current literature relating to staff supervision. After piloting the questionnaire with three early childhood directors, modifications were made to the final format. The survey was eight pages in length and was estimated to take between 20-30 minutes to complete. Open-ended questions, as well as rating and ranking scales, were used.

Survey Design

The questionnaire was divided into three parts:

Part A Information about you and your service
Part B Issues in supervision
Part C Staff development strategies

A request for written Staff Assessment Profiles was also included.

'Information about you and your service' consisted of questions relating to management structure; number of licensed places; number and qualifications of all full-time and part-time staff currently employed; title, qualifications and length of time employed in present position; years in present position and previous experience as a supervisor.

'Issues in supervision' consisted of questions relating to preparedness for supervision role; identification of supervision tasks in terms of degree of difficulty currently experienced; strategies used by the supervisor to enhance own supervision skills; strategies used to assess the professional strengths and weaknesses of staff.

The list of supervisor areas of difficulty was based on the work of Johnson (1984) who sought to identify what early childhood teachers experience as problem areas.

'Staff Development Strategies' consisted of questions relating to: use of specific staff development strategies and perceived effectiveness; how professional development information is shared by staff.

Written Staff Assessment Profiles: Respondents were asked to provide a copy of any written Staff Assessment Profile currently being used. The profiles were analysed using a coding system which identified a focus on seven general groupings.

Survey Procedures

Questionnaires and letters were sent to Authorised Supervisors of 324 long day care centres in NSW. The services, chosen at random, represented a range of management structures including community based, private for profit, local council, work based, church sponsored, Sydney Day Nursery Association, Kindergarten Union of NSW and TAFE organisations.

Analysis of Data

Data was analysed using the SAS System (1989). Cross tabulations were applied to a number of variables; however, in all cases, the cells had expected counts of less than 5, indicating that the chi-square test would not necessarily be valid. It should be noted that, for all questions, there was a number of 'nil' responses which are indicated in the Tables by 'missing'. When comparing variables, this has the effect on some tables of percentages not adding up to 100%.

RESULTS

Survey Sample

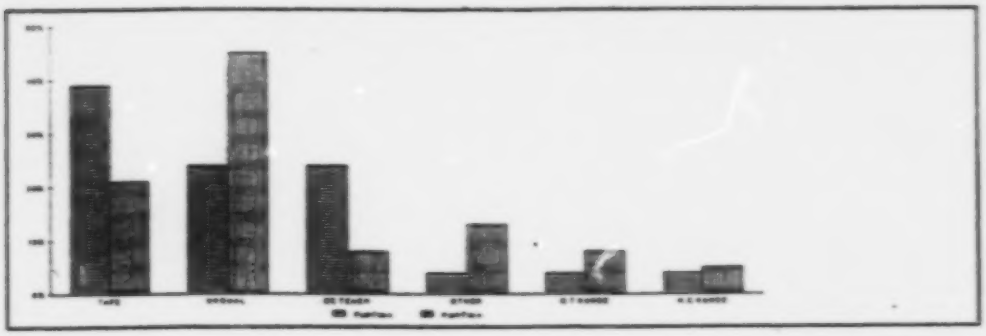
Of the 324 Directors surveyed, 162 returned completed forms, representing a response rate of 50%. The majority of services that responded to the survey were community based (42%), the next largest group being managed by local councils (30%) with the remaining 28% consisting other management structures. Services with a licence capacity between 31-40 places were represented in 63% of those forms returned. As anticipated, most of the respondents were Teaching-Directors (72%) with 23% Non-Teaching Directors and 5% indicating another title such as 'co-ordinator' or 'supervisor'.

Title, Qualifications and Experience

Qualifications of Directors could be divided into four main groups, that is, 76% Early Childhood trained teachers (BEd EC/Dip Teach EC); 2% teachers other than Early Childhood trained; 12% TAFE certificates; and 10% 'other'. 63.5% of Directors stated that they had been teaching 10 years or less; While 69% of respondents stated that they had previous experience as a Director, 60% had held the position of Director for five years or less.

Chart 1 shows the breakdown in positions/qualifications of full-time and part-time staff employed in the centres. It can be seen that Early Childhood trained teachers (BEd EC/Dip Teach EC) make up only 24% of full-time staff along with an equal representation of unqualified staff. The largest group of full-time staff is those with TAFE training (38%).

Chart 1
Breakdown of full-time and part-time staff by qualifications
(All services)



Allocation of Hours for Staff Supervision

44% of all supervisors allocate up to four hours on staff supervision, while 33% allocate between four and eight hours with the remaining 22% indicating 'other' hours. The representation of hours where respondents stated 'other' varied from no hours or none specified (seven respondents); 'ongoing' or 'all of the time' (eleven respondents); and a wide variety of specific hours ranging from 1/2 hour per week per staff member to 28 hours per week in a 24 hour work-based child care centre.

The category 'other' included 32% of respondents who are Non-Teaching Directors. Of this group, 75% did not specify the number of hours allocated to staff supervision but commonly referred to this task as 'ongoing'. It is interesting to note that 60% of supervisors in work-based care are Non-Teaching Directors compared to only 19% in community based centres.

TABLE 1

PERCENTAGE OF HOURS ALLOCATED TO STAFF SUPERVISION

Supervisor Variables	n	Up to 4 hours		4-8 hours		Other	
		%	n	%	n	%	n
Average hours allocated (all services)	162	44	64	33	48	20	32
Missing = 18							

	Total		Up to 4 hours		4-8 hours		Other	
Release Time	n	%	%	n	%	n	%	n
Yes	97	63	50	42	30	25	20	17
No	56	37	38	20	36	19	26	14
Total	**153**			**62**		**44**		**31**
Missing = 9								

		Up to 4 hours		4-8 hours		Other	
Title	n	%	n	%	n	%	n
Non-Teach Dir	37	37	12	34	11	28	9
Teach Dir	116	45	46	35	36	20	21
Other	8	62	5	12	1	25	2
Total	**161**		**63**		**48**		**32**
Missing = 1		Missing = 19					

Release Time

63% of supervisors indicated that they were allocated release time from face to face teaching (Table 1) while 37% stated that they had none. Of those who had designated release time, 50% of those who responded indicated that they allocated up to 4 hours for staff supervision compared to 38% of staff without release time. It is interesting to note that 36% of staff without release time indicated that they spent more than 4 hours on staff supervision compared to 30% of those with release time. Approximately half of the respondents without release time who stated 'other' hours did not specify the amount of time allocated to supervision.

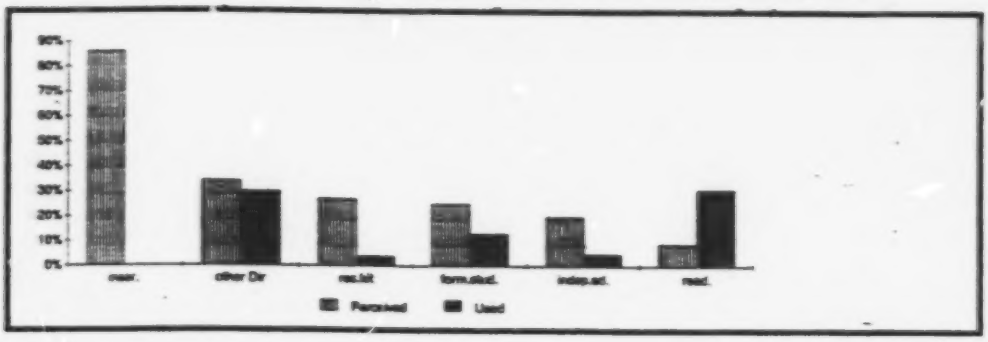
Views on preparedness for Supervision

Preservice training; inservice training; interactions with, and observations of, other Directors; interactions with, and observations of, other staff; informal discussion with colleagues; discussions with the Children's Services Adviser (CSA); and professional reading all rated between 82-100% in terms of significant factors in preparation for supervision. Fifty-three percent of respondents stated that formal training had adequately or partially prepared them for the role of supervisor, 33% felt that they had been inadequately prepared and 14% stated that they had had no formal preparation for supervision.

Strategies used to Enhance Supervision Skills

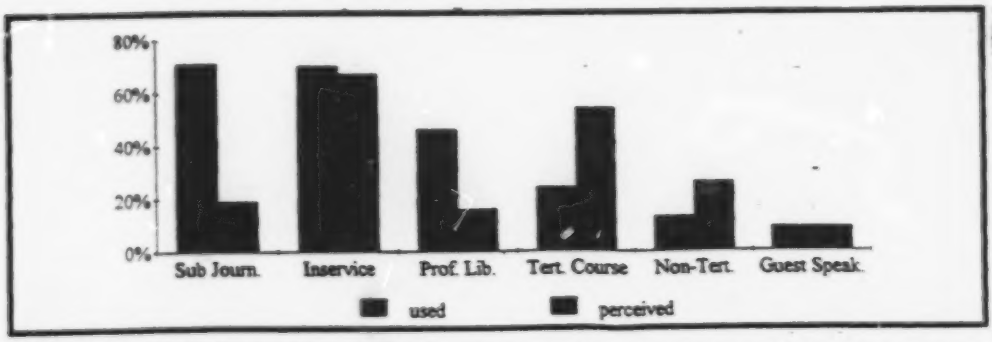
Chart 2 refers to the current strategies used to enhance supervision skills and those perceived to be most effective. No strategies were reported as being used on a regular basis to enhance supervision skills. Professional reading and meetings with other Directors was used regularly by only 30% of supervisors, while formal study, regular supervision with an independent adviser and resource kits were use l less frequently.

Chart 2:
Strategies used and perceived as being most effective in enhancing supervision skills



Inservice training is clearly perceived as the most effective strategy to enhance supervision skills. Respondents were not asked if inservice was currently being used as a strategy to enhance supervision skills.

Chart 3
Staff development strategies used and perceived to be most effective



With the exception of inservice, staff development strategies used and those which are thought to be most effective differed greatly. Chart 3 shows that while supervisors used subscriptions to journals and professional resource libraries as a technique to enhance professional development of staff, neither were seen as effective. Inservice training was both utilised and seen to be an effective staff development strategy. Tertiary courses were also perceived as effective but were not reported as being utilised.

Experienced Difficulty in Staff Supervision

Respondents were asked to rate specific supervision tasks (1-5) in order of experienced difficulty, 1 being least difficult and 5 being most difficult. The scores represent the total rating for the 21 issues (Table 2). 'Raising issues of a personal nature', 'dealing with staff:staff conflict', 'raising concerns in relation to poor staff attitudes' assisting staff to set professional goals and 'raising issues of bias in staff' rated as the most difficult issues in staff supervision.

TABLE 2
EXPERIENCED DIFFICULTY IN STAFF SUPERVISION

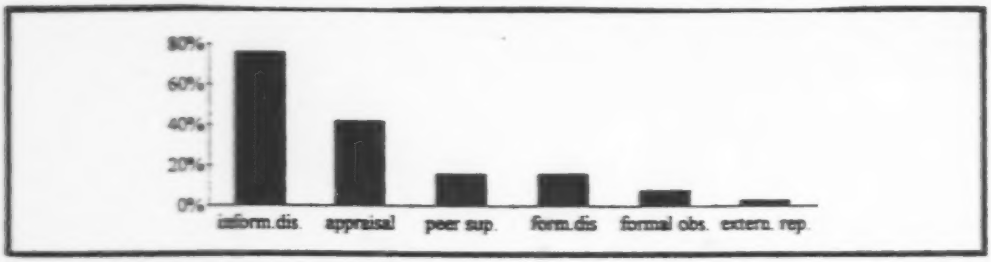
Number and Percentage of Respondents Who Rated Each Item Most Difficult

	%	n
raising issues of a personal nature	73	116
dealing with staff:staff conflict	72	114
raising concerns in relation to poor staff attitudes	66	105
assisting staff to set professional goals	62	99
raising issues of bias in staff	62	98
giving constructive criticism in relation to prof. prac.	54	86
giving constructive criticism in relation to written planning	54	86
monitoring professional staff relationships	51	82
ensuring staff follow-up on agreed tasks	51	81
raising concerns in relation to inapprop. prac.	50	79
discussing differences in philosophy	49	78
monitoring the relationship betw. staff & parents	42	67
establishing a leadership role	38	61
raising issues in relation to management of chn	34	54
delegation of admin. tasks	32	51
identifying staff training needs	32	51
disseminating information to staff	30	47
monitoring the rel'ship betw. staff & ch'n	30	48
general performance	29	45
assigning staff tasks and responsibilities	2	36
communication/interactions with other team members	19	30

missing (all responses) = 60

Both in relation to years of teaching experience and years of experience as a Director there is a trend towards lessening difficulties in supervision and increased years of experience.

Chart 4
Strategies used to assess the professional development needs of staff



Two strategies most commonly used to assess the professional development needs of staff are informal discussion with individual staff member and the use of a staff appraisal form.

DISCUSSION

Title and Qualifications of Director

Of the survey sample, only 24% of full-time staff are early childhood trained teachers, 76% of this group are represented by the respondents. This highlights the diversity of staff qualifications in long day care centres, and also indicates that the Director in many cases may be the only staff member employed with 3 or 4 year teaching training. It is interesting to note that 69% of respondents stated that they had had previous experience as a Director prior to their present position, possibly indicating that previous experience as a supervisor is seen as a desirable factor in the selection of a Director.

Multiple Staffing

There were ten categories of staff qualifications found within the services represented in the survey. This does not take into account the diversity of qualifications that is identified in the group 'other'. This group includes a variety of overseas qualifications, infant-primary training, disabilities training, and BA's. The findings reflect the trend both in Australia and overseas in relation to the employment of staff with a great diversity of training (Ebbeck, 1991; Veale, 1991; Jorde-Bloom, 1988; Almy, 1981).

The fact that early childhood trained teachers are not representative of the largest group of staff employed is of concern particularly when the results show that there is an equal representation of unqualified staff. This is perhaps even more concerning when considering the research which indicates a high correlation between qualified early childhood teachers and positive outcomes for children in care (Bredekamp, 1989; Whitebook, Howes & Phillips, 1989). The results highlight the challenge for the supervisor who must meet the ongoing professional development needs of staff with diverse levels of skills. The trend towards employment of staff other than Early Childhood trained is more apparent in the employment practices of part-time staff, where 45% employed are unqualified. This reflects the affordability issue, as employment of part-time staff is often crucial in overcoming problems with staff:child ratios, particularly during shift changes and rostered breaks. Employment of unqualified part-time staff may also reflect a trend towards greater delegation of tasks that do not require a high level of expertise but nevertheless are essential to the smooth running of the service. However, supervision becomes more complex when faced not only with limited time and competing demands, but also dealing with practical issues of staff availability. For supervision to occur both the supervisor and the staff member must allocate

mutually convenient, uninterrupted time if the process of supervision is to be effective. The issue of time is verbalised by one Director: 'Time effects all of these (supervision) factors, especially when staff are absent'.

Hours Allocated to Staff Supervision

Release Time: It is clear that although 37% of Directors are not allocated any officially designated release time the reality is that an Teaching-Director's spend a significant proportion of their time on tasks other than face-to-face teaching. This again raises the issue of the complexity of the supervisor's role in Early Childhood settings where there is continual juggling of the supervisor's time between competing depends. The common practice of employing teaching directors imposes the great barrier of 'time' in relation to supervision.

Croll, Lewis, Kelly and Godhard (1993) in a study of the time allocated to specific tasks undertaken by the Director found that of the six major task areas (staff related; parent related; child related; administrative; professional development and other tasks) only 9% of the time was allocated to staff related tasks. In this survey 44% of respondents indicated that they allocated up to 4 hours per week on staff supervision. This was the most common response. As most Directors work a minimum of 40 hours per week, at best, time allocated by this group of respondents represents approximately 10% of the Directors working week, a figure similar to the findings of Croll et al.

Title: When comparing hours allocated to staff supervision in relation to 'title', Non-Teaching Directors are not spending significantly more time on staff supervision than their Teacher-Director colleagues. Non-Teaching Directors represent only 23% of all respondents and most were employed in work-based centres. This may reflect a trend in the employment practices of larger corporations who may perhaps better recognise and acknowledge the status and responsibilities of the Director as a manager or leader within the organisation.

It is clear from the responses of Teaching-Directors that a considerable amount of time is being allocated in the area of staff supervision, taking the Director away from teaching duties. The task of supervision is, of course, not the only responsibility that Directors have outside of the teaching role, making it apparent that the title 'Teaching Director' may have in fact very little to do with classroom teaching.

Views on preparedness for Supervision

Preparedness for supervision is seen to be a critical factor in the continued development of quality early childhood services (Caruso, 1991). This is reflected in the 82-100% agreement rating of factors thought to be important in preparedness for the supervisory role. All respondents strongly agreed that inservice training was an important factor. Strategies such as interactions with other Directors and staff as well as informal discussions with colleagues and the Children's Services Adviser (CSA) were also rated highly. This should be considered in the context of the qualifications of service supervisors, 76% of whom are early childhood teacher trained. It also raises the question of how best to prepare staff for the supervisory role. Respondents indicated some initial preparation could be usefully undertaken at the preservice level, for example, communication skills; conflict resolution. However, many indicated that specific preparation in relation to supervision is more likely to be effective at a later stage. Directors comment: 'I think it's a hands-on experience ... I don't see how you could do much training until you are on the job'.

Strategies used to enhance Supervision skills

Clearly there is no single strategy used predominantly on a regular basis by the respondents to enhance supervision skills. Professional reading was used regularly by only 31% of supervisors, while 79% said they rarely or never used regular sessions with an independent adviser to develop

supervision skills. However, as indicated by the respondents views on preparedness for supervision, discussion with the Children's Services Advisers was rated highly. This conflicts with the response in relation to strategies to enhance supervision skills, where sessions with an independent adviser rated extremely low. The low use of formal study or a resource kit may reflect the lack of access to these types of strategies. Respondents were asked to identify strategies used to enhance their supervision skills and to also state which strategies they felt were most effective in enhancing supervision skills. Supervisors see inservice training as the most valuable method of developing their own supervision skills. It is perhaps the ability of inservice training to specifically target particular issues that would allow for a strong focus on supervision skills. It may also be seen as an opportunity to share and discuss strategies and concerns with colleagues who have a similar professional development need. It is interesting to again note that professional reading is not rated highly. This may reflect the view that discussion and the exchange of ideas and practices is a more effective strategy when attempting to develop skills in the area of supervision.

Experienced Difficulty in Staff Supervision

Raising issues of a personal nature and dealing with staff:staff conflict were reported to be the most difficult issues to be dealt with by the supervisor. Confronting staff about concerns in the workplace and working towards a resolution of those concerns is the role of the supervisor. This task is made more difficult when the supervisor is not able to distance her/himself from being a colleague and member of a team to being the leader. Diversity of perceptions in relation to the role of the early childhood educator will lead to differences in professional commitment, which may result in conflict within the team.

Assisting staff to acknowledge differences in perception and practice while also acknowledging the need for a common set of goals and agreed upon principles of practice requires skilled leadership. Bennis (1989) suggests that in order to achieve this the supervisor must not only possess the ability to draw people together but also to be able to project an image of the organisation that will act as a motivating force. Raising issues of concern in relation to poor staff attitudes and bias in staff requires the supervisor to act as a consciousness raiser. Greenman (1984) suggests that this is a primary task for the Director. It is interesting to find that 'assisting staff to set professional goals' was rated highly as a commonly experienced difficulty among supervisors. This may reflect the difficulties of meeting the needs of the broad range of staff in relation to qualifications and experience. For example, assisting to set goals for a nurse new to the child care industry, a new graduate or an unqualified staff member with 20 years experience presents a range of challenges and issues that require a great deal of expertise from the supervisor. Utilising supervision strategies that will allow for individual needs to be met is clearly a challenge for the Director.

Common to each of the five issues experienced by the respondents as being most difficult is the need for the supervisor to possess highly developed communication skills which would allow the supervisor to articulate concerns and explore strategies to address identified problems without alienating the staff member concerned. Dealing with issues where personal attitudes, values and beliefs have a significant impact on professional practice is perhaps the most challenging of all supervisory tasks (Hegland, 1989; Hoy & Forsyth, 1986; Greenman, 1984).

Concern for individual relationships is seen to be a significant feature of the supervisory task of Early Childhood Directors. It is interesting to note that those issues rank as being least difficult tend to focus on tasks that require less demands on personal/professional values. For example, 'assign tasks & responsibilities'; 'general performance'; 'dissemination of information to staff'. This is supported in the literature which acknowledges the importance of experience and practice as a contributing factor in the development of supervision skills (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1985).

Assessing Skill Development Needs

By far the most commonly reported strategy used to assess the professional development needs of staff is informal discussion, which would require the least demand in terms of time for both the supervisor and the staff member. It also reflects the nature of staff roles in early childhood services in which role diversity and task sharing is the norm (Ebbeck, 1991). Informal discussion requires no fixed time frame, no structure, and no real necessity for follow-up. Again, however, the issue of time becomes a critical factor, as one Director states: 'The role of the teacher-Director is very time constraining, staff supervision often suffers through lack of time'.

CONCLUSION

Clearly, supervision takes place at some level in all services. Whether supervision is used to merely monitor day-to-day job performance or whether it is used as a strategy to promote the professional development of staff remains unclear. What is evident from the study is that the strategies and skills necessary for effective supervision are less than clearly defined by those responsible for this task. Supervisors in child care settings are faced with the management and support of staff with diverse backgrounds, training and experience. This, along with the critical issue of time, represents the major challenges of the supervision task. Allocating more time to staff supervision is not merely a matter of reorganising the workload or reassessing priorities. All teaching Directors are considered as primary contact staff for licensing purposes, therefore, those Directors have a statutory responsibility under the existing child care regulations to ensure that staff:child ratios are maintained at all times. The issue then becomes one of finance, i.e., the employment of additional staff to allow staff release time.

Considering the allocation of time specifically for the task of supervision, it was found that factors such as management structure, licensed places, designated release time and whether or not the supervisor was a teaching or non-teaching Director were not found to be significant in terms of the actual amount of time allocated to the process of supervision. However, this needs to be qualified by taking into account that what is defined as supervision may in fact vary from one Director to another. It also reflects the complex and multifaceted role of the Director who must juggle limited time with competing demands.

Perhaps the most surprising finding is that designated release time from face-to-face teaching appears not to be a contributing factor in terms experienced difficulty in supervision. There was, however, a clear trend in relation to experienced difficulty, years of teaching experience, and years of experience as a Director. The results showed that with an increasing levels of experience, both as a teacher and a Director, there is a decrease in the level of experienced difficulty in supervision. This supports the comments by Directors that skills in supervision are developed over a period of time and are gained through a combination of training and experience.

There is little evidence that supervision is carried out in other than an informal manner. Staff appraisals are perhaps the nearest technique to a formal system of supervision. However, it cannot be concluded that informal strategies are not effective, but rather that they are used because they 'best fit' both the team oriented approach to child care and the lack of available release time.

It is concerning to find that there is a general lack of interest in the use of professional reading as a source of information and support for both developing supervision skills and as a means of promoting general professional development. While 75% of all respondents stated that their service subscribed to professional journals, the actual use of such material rated very poorly.

The study indicates that there are a number of areas requiring further research, i.e., how Directors both divide and manage their time; exploration of resources that would assist the Director in the task of supervision that are user-friendly and readily accessible; further exploration of the areas of supervisor experienced difficulty to determine more precisely the nature of these problems; and

finally, the exploration of an effective model of supervision that could be implemented within the existing constraints of a long day care setting.

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QUALITY TALK IN EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

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ABSTRACT

The first 15 of the 52 principles set out in *Putting Children First: Quality Improvement and Accreditation System Handbook (1993)* focus on quality interactions between staff, parents, and children. However, quality is difficult to measure. How do general principles on quality interaction translate, for example, into verbal exchanges? This paper explores features of quality talk in early childhood educational programs for children between birth and eight years, and discusses how quality can be documented.

INTRODUCTION

In all areas of Australian society today there is increased emphasis on accountability and on quality. Education is no exception. The first 15 of the 52 principles set out in *Putting Children First: Quality Improvement and Accreditation System Handbook (1993)* focus on quality interactions between staff, parents, and children. The core principles (i.e., those in which 'Good quality' is mandatory for accreditation) are these:

Principle 1 Staff interactions with children are warm and friendly;

Principle 2 Staff treat all children equally and try to accommodate their individual needs: they respect diversity of background;

Principle 3 Staff treat all children equally and try to accommodate their individual needs: they treat both sexes without bias;

Principle 4 Staff use a positive approach in guidance and discipline;

Principle 10 There is verbal and written communication with all families about the centre;

Principle 11 There is active interchange between parents and staff; and

Principle 14 Staff communicate well with each other.

These are general principles which, to form part of an accreditation process, need to be translated into quality practices. The focus of this paper is verbal exchanges between teachers and children in four Year 1 primary classrooms and the four year old groups in four childcare centres. Data were collected during small group activities for a minimum of four hours. Interactions were audiotaped, transcribed, and divided into 'messages' which are equivalent to clauses with or without embedding (Hasan, 1983). Messages were analysed using as interpretative tools five semantic networks, one of which is discussed in this paper (Appendix 1). It is suggested that semantic networks offer a means of mapping quality talk.

FEATURES OF QUALITY TALK

Studies of adult child talk over the past twenty years have attempted to identify features of high quality interaction. Some of these are:

- planned provision for development of children's competence to use language for a wide range of functions, oral and written (e.g., Tough, 1977; Wells, 1981; Derewianka, 1990);
- talk which is appropriate in terms of children's backgrounds, their development, their interests, and the social situation (Bernstein, 1975; Heath, 1982);
- effective scaffolding, so that adult talk is matched with a child's talk in terms of complexity of language level and ideas, with adults listening attentively and sensitively to understand a child's meaning, then developing and extending that meaning (Vygotsky, 1987; Rogoff, 1990; Banham, in press); and
- a balance in verbal interactions, with children as well as adults, initiating interactions, extended turns, and a joint construction and negotiation of shared meaning - conversation, not interrogation (Christie, 1988; Makin, 1994).

Often overlooked in discussion of quality talk is the important background assumption that there is a match between the language(s) spoken by children and that spoken by the teacher. If this is not the case, special consideration must be given to issues such as whether a child's home language will be replaced by English or whether education will assist the child to become bilingual (Wong-Fillmore, 1991; Makin, Campbell & Jones-Diaz, 1995).

QUALITY VERSUS REALITY

More research has been carried out in upper primary schools than in child care centres. It has generally focussed upon whole class activities. A summary of features of typical classroom talk, as supported by a number of research studies, is as follows:

- child-initiated sequences are rare (Barnes, 1976);
- turns are very disparate with teacher talk dominating up to 70% (Mehan, 1979; Cazden, 1988; Reid, Forrestal & Cook, 1989);
- in a 45-minute period, the amount of time left for a class of 30 to contribute is an average of 20 seconds per pupil (Bullock Report, 1975);
- questions are primarily low level, requiring recall of factual information. They are the province of the teacher and are usually display questions (Perrott, 1988); and students respond with one word or one sentence answers (Reid et al, 1989).

The higher adult-child ratio in early childhood programs for children under the age of five, the smaller group sizes, and a child-centred curriculum might lead one to expect different typical features in these situations. Yet a number of studies have found many limitations in verbal interaction in early childhood programs, for example:

- little use of language for reasoning, predicting, problem solving (Tough, 1977);
- a more limited set of conversational options than is present in the home (Wells, 1981);
- little sense of intellectual struggle and of real attempts to communicate (Tizard & Hughes, 1984; Makin, 1994);
- lowered expectations of children from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds (Tizard & Hughes, 1984); and

- lowered expectations of children whose home language backgrounds are languages other than English (Makin, 1983; Torr, 1993).

MAPPING QUALITY TALK

Collection of naturalistic language as the aim of the researcher presents a complex situation. Teachers differ as do children. Curriculum content differs. The socioeconomic backgrounds of the children differ as do their language backgrounds, their gender, their place within the family, their out-of-school experiences, their moods and the group dynamics. The presence of an investigator inevitably affects naturalistic talk, especially if microphones or video cameras intrude on the scene. It is important to find appropriate instruments which will reveal as objectively as possible and in fine detail, comparable levels of quality.

With so many variables in classrooms, even if strictly controlled scientific research were able to be undertaken, it would be unlikely to result in completely replicable studies or in widely generalisable results. Indeed, the types of questions to which teachers and teacher educators would like to find answers (e.g., the relationship between language and learning) may well be unanswerable in any final sense.

Researchers' study of naturalistic data have been supported by developments in the philosophy of science since the 1960s and '70s, development which has contributed to qualitative research becoming accepted as both valid and valuable over recent years. Popper (1969), Kuhn (1970), and Lakatos (1974), were concerned with the process of gaining knowledge. They accepted as inevitable the intermingling of theory and observation, and the impossibility of avoiding some degree of assumptive colouration of data collected in any research taking place in real life social environments. Chalmers (1976:60), in his summary of developments in the philosophy of science of that period, cites a vivid metaphor used by Popper (cited in Chalmers, 1968: 111):

The empirical basis of objective science has f thus nothing "absolute " about it. Science does not rest upon solid bedrock. The bold structure of its theories rises, as it were, above a swamp. It is like a building erected on piles. The piles are driven down from above into the swamp, but not down to any natural or "given" base; and if we stop driving the piles deeper, it is not because we have reached firm ground. We simply stop when we are satisfied that the piles are firm enough to carry the structure, at least for the time being.

As researchers begin to drive down their piles, they do so from within a particular framework of beliefs, for example, the belief that knowledge is a social construct, with language as the main tool with which human beings construct and interpret the context in which they live (Bruner, 1983; Vygotsky, 1987; Luria, 1976; Rogoff, 1990; Halliday, 1975).

Another belief, difficult to 'prove' in the strict scientific sense, is that teacher-child talk influences children's learning (Bernstein, 1975; Well, 1981; Heath, 1982; Cazden, 1988). Increased awareness of this influence - how it operates and what its effects may be - can lead to conscious adaptation of some aspects of individual style. Teachers are of central importance in the formal educational process, particularly in the early years of education. Teachers can identify habitual aspects of their interaction style and hence identify areas for change. Identification of areas for change can be the first step in improving interaction quality. Semantic networks (Appendix 1) offer a way of building a picture of what the participants in educational activities are doing when they talk with each other.

SEMANTIC NETWORKS

One way in which semantic networks can be used is to identify some of the features which realise different teacher leadership styles, in particular, democratic and authoritarian leadership styles

(Lewin, Lippitt & White, 1939). In two recent projects, teachers and children were studied in four Year 1 classrooms (Makin, 1994) and in four child care centres (Makin & White, in press).

In order to carry out the initial investigation in the Year 1 classrooms, insights from two theoretical perspectives were combined: systemic functional linguistics as developed primarily by Halliday (1985 and elsewhere); and role theory, as developed by Lewin et al (1939). Features of Hasan's message semantics network (1983) were selected and modified in order to produce five networks which paralleled leadership criteria as described by Lewin et al (Appendix 2). These five networks provided interpretative tools which enabled the four teachers to be placed along a continuum of more democratic to more authoritarian. Some of the characteristic features of the democratic style echo Rogoff's description (1990) of effective scaffolding, in particular, involving children in setting goals, helping them see why they are doing something (the overall purpose) and how different activity steps along the way contribute to the overall goal, and giving them increasing responsibility as they become able to handle it. One of the four teachers in the Year 1 classrooms was found to display a style which shared features of both democratic and authoritarian styles. In this case, a leadership style which realised certain features of authoritarianism also made explicit to children that they were expected to be thinkers and decision-makers and to take responsibility for their own work. This style was categorised as *predominant*.

Certain semantic characterisations were seen as of central importance in differentiating role types:

- questions: opinion-seeking and explanation-seeking;
- evaluations, (positive and negative) and support for evaluations. Also, whether children were given supporting information which helped them understand why they were being evaluated in a particular way;
- non-exhortative commands, commands to cognise and support for commands and supporting information as per evaluations; and
- offers of global information.

A SEMANTIC NETWORK FOR COMMANDS

One of the five semantic networks used focussed on commands (Appendix 1). This network allows a comparison of different types of commands relating to task facilitation. Classroom participants (both T and C) can be commanded to be (e.g., *be a good boy,)*, to act (e.g., go *and get it)*, to attend (e.g., *look at this one)*, or to cognise (e.g., *now you have to decide)*. At this level, it is possible to gain an initial idea as to whether there is an orientation within the classroom to being thoughtful and reflective, or whether organisation does not encourage this orientation. The distinction between Da2 (command to act) and Da4 (command to cognise) is particularly important in this regard. The schooling context might lead one to expect a strong representation of 'cognise' commands. However, this expectation was not fulfilled.

The next level of Network D offers a way of differentiating between non-exhortative and exhortative commands. In general, non-exhortative commands are realised by interrogatives, and, less commonly, by statements, often prefaced and/or modalised. Exhortative commands are realised most commonly by imperatives. This distinction introduces the possibility of the presence or absence of addressee negotiation power. The presence of such freedom or lack of freedom can, of course, be illusory; and teachers, perhaps unfairly, are often accused of overuse of a falsely democratic mode of expression which suggests more freedom than may be found to exist if a child actually takes it at face value. The *would you like to put away your books now and come and sit on the mat* type of command is not normally expected to be answered by a *no, I 'd rather finish what I 'm doing*.

Non-exhortative commands can be enunciative or suggestive. It might be expected that in a more democratically-led classroom, non exhortative commands will be more common than exhortative commands. On a more delicate level, non exhortative commands may in turn be enunciative or suggestive. Enunciative commands may differ as to whether they allow discretion or suggest obligation, and as to whether they are consultative or assertive. Suggestive commands, as Hasan (1988:25) writes, blur *the boundary between co-operation and demand*. She suggests further that *selection of this feature is conducive to the suppression of distinctions between authority and benefaction, between command and offer, between co-ercion and co-operation*. Speaker-inclusion in suggestive commands such as *let's get dressed* does not represent intended duality of action. Speaker-inclusion in exhortative commands, such as *let's put away the blocks* does, however, represent an offer of assistance. This distinction is seen as being one way to indicate whether the leader acts as a group member. Exhortative commands may also be emphatic or non-emphatic, and, if emphatic, emphatic for the addressee(s) or for the action. Group membership would seem more likely to be conveyed through speaker-inclusive emphasis on action rather than on the participant(s).

The final divisions in Network D relate to whether or not commands are supported by reasons, by consequences, either for the addressee(s) or for the project, or by other information which may give the addressee(s) insight into the impetus behind a command.

DISCUSSION

Salient questions seem to be:

- what are children commanded to do: to be, to act, to attend, to cognise?
- are commands absolute, or do they offer room for negotiation?
- are commands specific to the immediate context only, or is insight offered through supporting information as to how what is to be done fits within a wider perspective? and
- does T identify him or herself as a group member?

A number of interesting features emerged from application of Semantic Network D to the transcribed data from the Year I classrooms. Two of the four teachers chose the option 'command' very frequently. Lewin et al would identify both as, on this feature, demonstrating an authoritarian style. Yet, there was an important difference in how the command option was realised. One of the teachers chose commands in over one third of messages. Commands were mainly exhortative commands to act. This teacher's commands were the least often supported of the commands of the four. This teacher appeared, upon analysis of commands, to be the most authoritarian in approach.

The other teacher chose commands almost half of the time (i.e., even more frequently). However, she also showed the widest range of commands, with 'cognise' being a frequent choice, something which differentiated her from the other teachers. She ranked high in terms of both non-exhortative commands and supported commands. She frequently exhorted children to *think, decide, choose, vote, consider*. This teacher demonstrated what was named the *predominant* style. It shares some features of the authoritarian style, including a high incidence of commands. However, the type of command led children towards becoming empowered learners. This teacher's aim was a more democratic classroom. If children are to learn to be learners and to develop a problem-solving orientation to learning, it would seem useful for teachers to ensure that cognitive activity is expected and valued. This is an important part of quality interaction

Analysis of data from four child care centres (Makin & White, in press) using semantic networks revealed that even in a small group art activity in a setting designed for four year olds, some of the

features identified as common in primary school data were also evident in the child care setting: teacher domination of talk in general; teacher domination of questions; few opinion-seeking questions. It was common in both settings for questions not to be answered because teachers continue to speak, therefore not offering children the opportunity of responding. There was, in both settings, teacher domination of commands, with few instances of supporting information. The main differences between the child care centres and the Year 1 centres were that fewer 'display' questions were asked in the centres, in other words, questions tend to be more genuine with the teacher actually seeking information from the children which she did not already know.

The teachers in the child care centres chose the command options considerably less frequently than did the Year 1 teachers. There was a higher incidence of non-exhortative commands which offer more room for negotiation. However, very few commands (4%) were supported with information which might help children understand why they are commanded to engage in certain behaviours or activities.

CONCLUSION

To improve the quality of verbal interaction between staff and children in child care centres, instruments are needed which help map clearly what is happening and which give teachers objective feedback on their habitual interaction patterns.

The small group may simply be the large group writ small (i.e., with more similar than dissimilar features of classroom discourse in evidence). In all eight settings which were studied, the transmission model was evident in small group interactions.

Semantic networks set out very clearly ranges of options open to speakers. They can be as detailed as is required and can yield a clear description of habitual semantic choice. In this way, profiles of teacher-child interaction styles can be developed. Another benefit arises from the fact that, when teacher-child talk is investigated, it may be useful to record, not only the presence of certain features in the discourse of teachers and children, but also the fact that there are options in verbal interaction which are not usually taken up by teachers or by children. Such omission may be equally meaningful. Absence of choice cannot be subjected to statistical procedures. One of the strengths of semantic networks as interpretative tools is their ability to reveal clearly what is not happening as well as what is happening.

Semantic networks can give insight into how talk in education settings contributes to the joint construction of knowledge which is the task of education and can give individuals and groups insight into their habitual semantic choices. This can help us move beyond generalised 'motherhood' statements to improve specific features of quality talk in early childhood programs.

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Appendix 1

Network D - Commands

Appendix 2

Authoritarian	Democratic	Laissez-faire
1. All determination of policy by the leader.	1. All policies a matter of group discussion and decision, encouraged and assisted by the leaders.	1. Complete freedom for group or individual decision, without any leader participation.
2. Techniques and activity steps dictated by the authority, one at a time, so that future steps were always uncertain to a large degree.	2. Activity perspective gained during first discussion period. General steps to group goal sketched, and where technical advice was needed the leader suggested two or three alternative procedures from which choice could be made.	2. Various materials supplied by the leader, who made it clear that he would supply information when asked. He took no other part in group discussion.
3. The leader usually dictated the particular work task and work companions of each member.	3. The members were free to work with whomever they chose, and the division of tasks was left up to the group.	3. Complete non-participation by leader.
4. The dominator was 'personal' in his praise and criticism of the work or each member, but remained aloof from active group participation except when demonstrating. He was friendly or impersonal rather than openly hostile.	4. The leader was 'objective' or 'fact minded' in his praise and criticism, and tried to be a regular group member in spirit without doing too much of the work.	4. Very infrequent comments on member activities unless questioned, and no attempt to participate or interfere with the course of events.

(Lewin, Lippitt & White, 1939:273)

RITUAL AND PEDAGOGY: HOW ONE TEACHER USES RITUAL IN A PRE-PRIMARY CLASSROOM SETTING

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ABSTRACT

Studies of ritual drawn from the disciplines of anthropology and sociology convey messages of conformity, consensus and cohesiveness as a means of maintaining the status quo. Questions arise, however, that warrant investigation particularly with regard to the role of ritual in structuring teaching in pre-primary classroom settings and the extent to which ritual serves pedagogical purpose for teachers.

The study in progress examined the forms and functions of ritual with particular reference to pre-primary settings. A key assertion in this study is that ritual provides a latent structure for the teacher that goes beyond the surface meaning of conformity and control to a deeper symbolic meaning for the participants. This paper examines ritual as a means of interpreting the tacit dimensions of how one teacher in a pre-primary setting works within an implicit pedagogical framework.

The interpretative paradigm of qualitative methodology has been adopted for the study with participant observation as the primary method of conducting field work and collecting data. The original sample comprises three pre-primary teachers in three school sites. This paper outlines a case study of one of these teachers and reports some preliminary findings of the research in progress.

The pre-primary setting provides an interesting field for investigating the pedagogy of teachers as it contrasts markedly with both primary and secondary education in organisation and structure of the environment, types of programs presented, role of the teacher and staffing requirements. In addition, there is a sense of commonality among public pre-primary centres and, to an outside observer, pre-primary centres have a significant degree of uniformity. Children appear to be engaged in similar types of learning experiences. Teachers seem to share a common purpose tied to a strong history of traditions and deeply held beliefs about the field, which stem from a shared philosophical base. The teachers' everyday classroom activities have the appearance of effortless organisation and routines. These classroom routines have been characterised as regular patterns of action which have been ritualised. That is, they are more or less invariant performances (Rappaport, 1989) that have become a form of communication through their symbols and gestures. According to Olson (1992), teachers use rituals and routines to orchestrate life in the classroom and, although the terms are often used interchangeably, ritual goes beyond routine in that it possesses a significance and structure beyond the surface messages transmitted through routine (Harris, 1992).

This study is investigating more closely the interplay between ritual and pedagogy, and how teachers use both variant and invariant aspects of ritual as a way of defining what is to be taught and how it is to be taught.

RITUAL

The study of ritual is embedded in cultural anthropology and is a complex and multi-faceted concept. The literature (Geertz, 1973; Rappaport, 1989; Jennings, 1982), drawn from the disciplines of anthropology, sociology and theology, attempts to define the functions and features of ritual and, in doing so, exposes the multi-dimensional aspects of ritual and highlights the difficulty associated with its definition, use and comprehension (McLaren, 1985, 1986). Ritual has been defined as a pattern of action (Jennings, 1982); a form of communication through signs, symbols and gestures (Harris, 1992); maintaining social order (McLaren, 1986; Bernstein et al, 1966); being responsible for enacting meaning through concrete patterned activity or action (Geertz, 1973); and as a means of sustaining, transmitting and internalising societal and cultural ideologies (Geertz, 1973; Henry, 1992). According to Harris (1992), ritual pervades society and culture, and society's values and norms are expressed and transmitted through ritual. A ritual performance can be either a mindless or a purposeful experience for both performers and participants. In some instances, ritual may denote a simple event that is taken for granted yet, conversely, ritual may be loaded with expressions of personal knowledge, experiences and personal philosophy.

Rappaport's (1989) definition of ritual suggests that there are two levels at work in the messages being transmitted by ritual. First, there is the message transmitted through the invariant order of the ritual, being that which we see, hear and perform and, secondly, the message carried by the deeper formation of meaning as indicated through the variations, signs and symbols included in the ritual.

In its simplest form, a ritual is an uncontested pattern of behaviour which has symbolic meaning for participants. Ritual goes beyond the surface meaning and is symbolic of a particular world view (Henry, 1992). According to Grimes (1982:36), ritualisation occurs through stylised, repeated gesturing and posturing and the 'rhythms and structures arise on their own ... they flow with or without our conscious assent'. This view maintains that ritual is both an implicit and explicit part of everyday life, which acts to sustain classroom culture (Henry, 1992). By examining the ritual system through key symbols, it is possible to know and understand how ideologies 'work' and how they are transmitted.

RITUAL IN EDUCATION

Schools and classrooms have been identified as rich sources of ritual systems which act to create and sustain assumptions and values and which, in turn, have powerful consequences for teaching and learning (Henry, 1992). Attempts have been made to link ritual with pedagogy but, according to McLaren (1986), these have been both tenuous and undisciplined. Yet, the degree to which ritual and teaching are interconnected has been under-examined, particularly in the field of early childhood education. Whilst the literature on ritual and schooling (McLaren, 1986; Henry, 1992; Bernstein et al, 1966) has centred on the sociological issues of maintaining control and order, and on the transmission and internalisation of school cultures and norms, the extent to which ritual goes beyond this point warrants further examination. The key issue is that ritual is a fact of school life, is enacted by teachers in their everyday classroom activities and, as such, must play an important role in teachers' and students' experiences.

The pre-primary teacher's day to day classroom practice reflects clearly defined organisation and routines. These routines are acted out and installed through repetitive patterns of actions which have the appearance of effortless automaticity. Ritual reflects the teachers choice and decisions about what is pedagogically sound and worthwhile, and is controlled by the teacher based on a personal ideology and understanding of teaching and learning. However, the extent to which teachers consciously and actively think through, plan and use ritual to achieve particular objectives or outcomes is not known. It may be that ritual enables the teacher to work within a framework which has the appearance of a simple systematic approach or, on the other hand, the ritualised

framework may act as a profound experience for the teacher and as a basis for inquiry and exploration for those participating. The question of whether ritual is a mindless, unspecified activity for the teacher, a way of filling in the day or, alternatively, a sophisticated means by which the teacher systematically translates intentions is of particular interest in this study.

PURPOSE

This paper examines those forms and functions of ritual (those activities performed by teachers in their day to day teaching) that have the qualities described by Grimes (1990) as repetitive, patterned, traditional, highly valued, symbolic and perfected as a way of explaining what one teacher values, knows and does. For the purposes of this discussion, the following questions give focus to the description and interpretation of the data:

- How does this teacher use ritual?
- What meaning of ritual is held by the teacher? and
- To what extent does the teacher work within, around and outside ritual?

Describing and interpreting the pre-primary teacher's actions may provide a way of making explicit the complex range of knowledge and understandings of pedagogy, theories, beliefs and ideologies held by the pre-primary teacher that go beyond the notion of 'common sense' and personal value.

METHODOLOGY

This study is based within the interpretive paradigm of qualitative research and adopts features distinctive of ethnography whilst recognising the situational constraints of classrooms. The theoretical perspective which guides and shapes the investigation and data analysis stems from the need to interpret, understand and describe meanings and processes (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992) related to the experiences and behaviours of teachers in pre-primary classroom settings. According to Erickson (1982:121), this involves 'being thorough and reflective in describing the everyday events in the setting and in identifying the significance of actions in the events from the various points of view of the actors themselves'.

The original research design takes the form of three case studies, with detailed examination and profiles of three pre-primary teachers within their natural classroom settings. During data collection (which is entering the third phase), the following techniques were applied: prolonged intensive observations in the field with recording in the form of field notes; observational records; taped interviews; video-taping and discussions. The researcher became immersed in the situation as a participant observer in order to describe and interpret action and meaning. Analysis has been concurrent with data collection and this paper reports a section of one of the case studies.

The teacher

Helen has been teaching for thirty five years and can be described as being in the 'twilight years' of her teaching career. She is a gentle, softly spoken lady, who radiates warmth, kindness and love. The quality which is most striking is her boundless energy and enthusiasm for the children and her work, to the extent that she calls them 'my children' and sincerely means it. An indication of her commitment is the hours she spends in preparation and organisation, often being at the school at 7.30 in the morning and leaving at 6.00 in the afternoon, with countless evenings and weekend attendances. There is an obvious joy for the work and company of children and she is passionate about the welfare of the children in her care.

> *I like to think that the child has the experience of coming to pre-primary and being free of any anxieties and pressures that might occur outside. That they can be happy and get on with their own little lives here in the*

> *centre and it be the most enjoyable part for them and a lovely learning experience.* (Interview 1:5)

Helen's interaction with children is of a very high standard and she is extremely positive, continually praising, encouraging, supporting and fostering children's involvement and contributions. Helen communicates in low, soft, expressive tones and at no time does she raise he voice beyond this level. She is a master of non-verbal communication and there are moments when her face speaks a thousand words. Her eyes sparkle with interest, her smile conveys pleasure, her facial expressions portray a gamut of emotions: surprise, excitement, concern, approval and displeasure. There is boundless energy in her movements around the room as she glides between groups and individuals in an attempt to contact each child with a personal touch.

Despite the ease and confidence she displays with the children, Helen projects a modest and almost humble persona when discussing the art of teaching. In thirty five years of teaching, her experience has focused entirely on the children and meeting their needs, and reflecting on her own practice has not been a significant part of her personal development. Over many years of teaching, Helen has developed and cultivated an array of routines, procedures and skills and has refined a personal approach which has become a hallmark of her style and her reputation as a 'superb pre-primary teacher' (confirmed by the positive feedback she has received over the years and continues to receive today from parents, principals, colleagues and past pupils). She includes a wide variety of strategies in her repertoire. These range from teacher-centred presentations to structured free-play and discovery learning experiences. Some of the techniques and approaches used have been well established over a number of years of teaching. However, there is also evidence of taking on board the latest program innovations such as the *First Step* language initiative. Helen speaks about her teaching in the following manner:

> *In Grade One I decided I was going to be a school teacher. And, in Grade Three or Four, there was this young teacher and she was so kind to me and she would say there is a lot of work to be done if you are going to be a teacher and she encouraged me to keep a diary* (Interview 1:1)

> *I've seen changes in the system and what I'm seeing at the moment I particularly like. I'm really an enthusiast, not an expert. I call myself an enthusiast because I see things happening and what I can do for the children, and some of my colleagues say, 'Think of your age', but I can see the benefits for the children* (Interview 1:3)

> *I have established a certain pattern because I need to know where I'm going. I need to structure my day's work. I feel comfortable and confident in my teaching and I feel the children are secure in knowing that we are going to do this and this and this* (Interview 5:1)

Relationships in the classroom are very well established and are a joy to observe. There is an obvious display of affection between the teacher and children and vice versa, with children freely hugging and sitting on Helen's knee and putting their arms around her neck. Helen cuddles and hugs children in return. Rather than demand or 'snap' children's attention, she quietly appeals to children who quickly respond, thus gently directing and monitoring the behaviours of the children. Control is too strong a word to use for the techniques Helen uses to manage her group.

The setting

Radford Pre-Primary (pseudonym) is attached to the local primary school but is located off site within a short walking distance to the school. The centre caters for full day schooling for five year old children. Over the years that Helen has been teaching at this centre, it has changed status from

community based to education department controlled. It is located in a middle socio-economic suburb in the metropolitan area of a capital city. The children represent a very homogeneous group in terms of social and economic status and cultural background.

The centre is a large open area, divided into a number of small play and work areas. An initial reaction on entering the centre is to pause and take in the visual stimulation. The walls are covered with evidence of children's work and of the current topic being explored. The ceiling is draped with art and craft work, and every section of the floor area seems to have a designated purpose. Despite the initial impact, the centre is neat and well organised. There is an abundance of high quality materials, equipment and resources, all carefully placed in a precise, orderly fashion ready for the children's use.

REPORTING THE DATA

The ritual of mat time

Mat time marks the beginning of the school day for Helen and the children. It is a time when the teacher constructs a context which is meaningful for the children and which will engage the children in her teaching.

The children arrive at the centre accompanied by an adult, usually a parent. As they arrive, they stop at the notice board on the verandah to read the message left by the teacher. Every day, the notice changes and the children's interest and anticipation of the message is clearly evident. The parents have been encouraged to share the messages with the children and to 'try to read it together'. They move into the centre and enthusiastically greet the teacher. Helen hugs the child and, crouching down on her haunches, puts her arm around him and makes a personal comment: 'I see you have a new blue bag, Damien'. The greeting is brief and, as the children congregate, Helen acknowledges as many as possible and makes herself available to parents should they want her attention. The 'real' greeting of the children will occur when all have gathered and assembled on the mat. As Damien moves through to the wash room to place his bag on the peg, his mother makes her final farewell and departs, and Damien makes his way to the green mat. To the observer, this scene appears chaotic with parents and children milling about. Children are enthusiastically pointing out accomplishments and various features of their work. Parents congregate, catching up with social talk or waiting to make brief contact with the teacher. Helen is readily available to comment, listen, answer questions or offer suggestions.

The green mat is a large carpeted area of the classroom generally reserved for floor activities. The mat area is used for both whole group and small group gatherings. However, it is especially recognised as the place where everyone assembles and the teacher is the focus of attention. At these times, the children sit cross-legged on the mat, wherever they prefer, and the dominant activities are discussion, talking, listening and interacting with the teacher and with other children. Children recognise that a significant amount of attention and controlled behaviour will be expected and that the teacher will take the centre stage and direct and instruct the proceedings.

> *I guess I like the children to be together to begin with. I like to greet them each morning as they come in but, sometimes, I miss them when they come in with Mum or Dad, so I feel I should use the mat time to acknowledge them. I like the mat time to be a time for gathering, a time for acknowledging and welcoming back the children who have been away and I can't do that if I haven't got them as a group. I do my language things, my theme work and tell them what is available and what is new, as it's always changing.* (Interview 3:6)

The children sit and wait for the whole group to assemble and, as they do, they chatter in a lively and enthusiastic manner. There is a relatively high level of noise, but no one seems to mind as the

children make themselves comfortable and choose friends with whom to sit. The teacher sits on a small, child size chair at one end of the green mat and the children gather up close to her, vying for the front position. Attention is called and slowly the chatter subsides and the teacher takes control.

Helen moves through a collection of activities and experiences during mat time with the children actively involved. An interesting feature is that the session is interspersed with children freely commenting, giving opinions, making suggestions and adding their personal experiences. There is no insistence on 'hands up' to speak. Helen displays an amazing technique for dealing with the interjections yet keeping her train of thought and ensuring that she stays on track.

> *I am aware of this and I guess it's only through experience that I can do it. In the early years of my teaching, I would have been thrown by the children's questioning or interruptions. I think the children need to have a say. It may not always be relevant but it's important to them. And if I'm going to help with language skills they must talk. They can easily learn to put their hands up in Year One. I don't need to teach them that.* (Interview 6:6)

The mat session incorporates greeting every child in the form of a roll call, where each individual is called, acknowledged, noted and commented upon. A 'star person' for the day is selected and honoured. The date and weather are recorded. Coming events are announced. Special program features are highlighted. All these events occur in brisk fashion and in a repeated pattern, which remained consistent and unchanged throughout the observation period of six months. However, it is as though these activities are the supporting act to the main attraction, which is the theme work.

Working with themes is a key feature of Helen's teaching and has been for the eighteen years she has been teaching at her present school. Helen uses the theme as a vehicle for her teaching and regards theme work as a 'key teaching and learning time' in her program. Each week, a theme is chosen and developed through the various learning centres and experiences. She imparts a body of content knowledge about the theme at the beginning of the week and this is further developed and expanded each day. During the delivery, Helen embarks on an exposition of the content which seems to pour forth with a sense of urgency. The facts and knowledge are accompanied by the use of visual aids. A pin-up board contains pictures and photographs, whilst samples of books, artefacts and memorabilia cover a nearby table. Throughout the presentation, Helen makes reference to these visual stimuli as she tells her story. It is a monologue, although punctuated by children's comments, thoughts and elaborations which are acknowledged and worked into the presentation, with great skill on the part of the teacher. The entire event is over in fifteen minutes but, in that time, Helen has covered a substantial body of content. This content will be recalled and further developed throughout the week with other whole group mat sessions and with activity work.

The theme work carries considerable significance for Helen. This is confirmed by the way it has remained virtually unchanged as a crucial part of her program for so many years. Another indication of its importance is the fact that it holds a major place in the timetable and in the delivery of the planned program. Helen is most reluctant to alter or omit theme work from her plan. She explains theme work in the following way:

> *I guess the children's interests provide my themes. I like to do lots of informational things with my themes. I begin with 'Myself' and lead on to 'Community Workers' - the family members going out into the community - this is an interest for the children. The 'International Themes' look at the multiculturalism in our society. I do it to support the families. Then we finish with 'Christmas'. At the same time, I have a number of sub-themes such as 'Book Week' and 'Silkworms'. A lot is me talking and I guess all the children are listening. But, later on in the*

> *week, I will recall the facts and general knowledge. I want the children to build background knowledge so they can make connections in other situations. I think children are not exposed to general knowledge as much as I would like. We find out about things like science, about society and multiculturalism. I want to develop social responsibility, and children being caring and sharing and accepting each other. So, there is a link between the beginning of the year, the caring and sharing, and the end with the different cultures and society.* (Interview 7:3-4)

With the delivery of content over, the activities for the day are introduced and procedures are explained. These activities generally tie in with the theme and represent part of the choices available to the children. The children are dismissed in an orderly fashion and make their way to their chosen activity. This point marks the end of the first phase of the day and the children enter a second phase of practical hands-on involvement.

DISCUSSION

Although it is clear that Helen is an excellent teacher who is able to apply many sound principles with ease, she had difficulty articulating her practice, as was evidenced by her discussions and interviews. This was a new situation for Helen and being placed in a position to explain and justify her actions was foreign to her. She was confident and comfortable describing the children and her program but the *why* questions were problematic for her. Over the observational period, conversations became easier and, as our relationship developed and various techniques in interviews and discussions were tried, Helen's thoughts and ideas flowed more freely.

Helen's teaching is carefully planned and skilfully executed. Her commitment is unwavering and her relationship with the children, parents and aide is highly commendable. She has developed a successful recipe for teaching, reinforced by accolades from all sections of the field. This encourages her to continue with her successes, yet she also embraces the new. Years of experience have resulted in certain decisions about what is important for young children and these are acted out in more or less invariant sequences of actions (Rappaport, 1989). The direction Helen takes is guided by her knowledge, values and beliefs about the social world, about what is good for young children and about the principles she holds for early childhood education.

What meaning does Helen have for ritual? Not surprisingly, the concept of ritual was something Helen had not thought about. However, she recognised that her teaching practice was patterned, repetitive, perfected and highly valued. At the beginning of a discussion one day, she enthusiastically burst forth with the following announcement:

> *I need ritual in my teaching. I really do! I rely on those rituals for my teaching and they can be used as a tool ... An important part is the continuity. The rituals give the children a continuous pattern.* (Interview 5:1)

It was not so much a startling revelation, but a way of articulating her understanding of her practice. Helen saw ritualised action as providing continuity to the day's events, thus giving the children a sense of security in the predictable pattern of daily activities. She believed that the sequence of these daily events offered children stability and a certain degree of order and organisation. For Helen, this was a reflection of her personal philosophy for early childhood education, which she expressed in the following manner:

> *I want to make sure the child is happy, safe and secure within the environment. that's my big thing, I suppose. Then, I like to know their strengths and weaknesses and I encourage their strengths and encourage them to overcome the weaknesses.* (Interview 1:5)

The morning session represented the construction of Helen's knowledge base. The classroom practice had been implemented over a long period of time and, for this teacher, had become ritualised. That is, it was clearly defined, firmly entrenched, well structured, certain and automatic. During the morning session, Helen had established a patterned set of behaviours which became a model for the children's learning and a shared conceptual schema which was acted out by all participants. For the teacher, it was an expression of a set of personal values, knowledge and philosophy. The teacher moved from the overt gestures of greeting, smiling and making personal comment and physical contact with children to the implicit purpose of familiarising herself with the emotional and temperamental state of the child in order to *tune in to how the child is for the day* and to ascertain *social, emotional and physical needs which will set the tone for the day for that child* (Interview 2:3). Mat time, an activity highly structured by the teacher, was understood by the children as a time when a high level of focus and controlled behaviour was expected and that the teacher would take charge and orchestrate the proceedings. Here, messages of certainty, conformity and unquestionableness were being communicated as the children were initiated into the culture of school and, more particularly, into the meaning of the actions and events installed by the teacher.

The theme work reflected Helen's personal view of what is important for the children to know. On the surface, it could easily be interpreted that scripted, fatuous knowledge was being presented. However, Helen had a framework for her curriculum which held significant meaning for her, which she highly valued and which she communicated to her children. More importantly, she saw theme work as building personal knowledge for the children which would form a foundation for making connections to future knowledge and experiences. Her personal philosophy of 'caring and sharing' and of everyone being happy and getting along harmoniously was evident as an underlying connecting theme to her program. The topics chosen for the theme work had a particular ritualised pattern or framework which was in accordance with Helen's personal belief system about early childhood curriculum and the ritual of mat time became a way of instilling this particular philosophy and technology of teaching held by her.

CONCLUSION

Helen's practice reflected a wealth of implicit practical knowledge built up over many years of working with young children. Her practice, which had the semblance of effortless organisation and routines and which was characterised by ritualised patterns of action, revealed a sophisticated knowledge base embedded in deep beliefs and theories about early childhood teaching and learning. Helen's aspirations and assumptions, together with a pool of experiences and personal world view, formed a source for responding to the daily demands of the classroom. In effect, Helen was working within a pedagogical format and the ritualised actions became a justification and enactment of a particular instructional form and teaching procedure and a reflection of her personal beliefs and ideology. For Helen, the ritual became a process by which she orchestrated daily life in the classroom and assigned meaning to the actions and events of mat time. The ritual of mat time provided the children with a sense of continuity, familiarity and security and the ritual became a framework for their learning and behaviour and worked to acculturate them into Helen's personal meaning of school.

Traditionally, early childhood education has been subjected to a number of common criticisms regarding the quality, credibility and value of early childhood programs. If rituals are part of the events which make up everyday life in the classroom and are constructed by the teacher as part of the interaction with students, it seems that ritual is a worthwhile lens through which to study the specialised knowledge embedded in teachers' actions in order to establish explicit principles and practices which reflect what pre-primary teachers know and do.

Describing the interpreting the forms and features of ritualised action in pre-primary settings provides a deeper and more sophisticated understanding of pre-primary teachers' thinking, their

beliefs, ideas and theories about what they do and how they do it. Examining the pedagogy, curriculum and practices underlying early childhood education will continue to inform the preparation of early childhood educators and move research efforts towards shaping the nature of the knowledge base of early childhood education for Australian contexts.

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YOUNG CHILDREN WHO EXPERIENCE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: AN IMPORTANT ISSUE FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the psychosocial adjustment of young children who were living in families where domestic violence had occurred. Early childhood teachers need to be aware that young children from violent homes may have adjustment problems and that they require social and emotional support from caring adults.

The research data was collected in a structured interview with 54 mothers who had at least one child in the age range of 3 to 6 years. These women had left a violent partner from 3 to 24 months prior to participation in the study and were not in a new relationship. The family interview schedule included the administration of the Conflict Tactics Scale (Straus, 1992) and the mothers also completed the Child Behaviour Checklist (CBCL) (Achenbach, 1991). At the time of interview, 42% of the children exhibited a level of behavioural problems which would warrant clinical intervention. A series of hierarchical regression analyses was conducted with scores on the CBCL as criteria. The variables of child age, sex, abuse status, level of family violence prior to separation, period of separation and post separation contact with the violent partner were the predictors. It was found that a high level of family violence prior to separation was the most consistent predictor for the extent of behavioural problems currently evidenced by the child. Ideas for how early childhood professionals can respond to the needs of children who live in violent families are discussed.

INTRODUCTION

Young children need family environments which foster positive social-emotional and behavioural development. However, children in families characterised by domestic violence do not experience environments which are optimal for their social and emotional well-being. These children will often construct inappropriate interpretations and responses to their experiences of violence which will affect their capacity to relate effectively to others (Jaffe, Wolfe & Wilson, 1990). Wallach (1993) noted that early childhood programs can be major resources to children who have experienced violence, by assisting them to develop alternative perceptions of themselves and by teaching them a range of social skills which would help them cope with their experiences. Resilience in children is developed through abilities to form relationships with others, by. effective social problem solving and by the capacity to utilise available social support (Garmezy & Masten, 1991). Early childhood teachers can help offset the negative effects of violence in the lives of young children by providing them with opportunities to develop these abilities in consistent and socially responsive environments.

UNDERSTANDING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Domestic violence is an encompassing term, most commonly equated with spousal abuse and it can include physical, verbal, emotional, sexual and financial abuse (New South Wales Domestic Violence Committee, 1990). In the majority of cases, the violence is perpetrated by men against women (South Australian Domestic Violence Council, 1987). Violence against women is a serious problem in Australian society and different surveys indicate that from one in three, to one in five families experience domestic violence (Easteal, 1994). Spousal abuse often begins in the family as soon as children are born, since infants and toddlers present significant stress on family life (Moore, 1979). As a result, many children from infancy observe the violence between their parents and experience the impact of the violence on family functioning.

As witnesses to domestic violence, children not only see and overhear the violence but are exposed to its results by observing parental distress and physical injury. Research has found that children are frequently victims of physical abuse in families where there is domestic violence (Gelles, 1987; Hughes, 1988; Jouriles, Barling & O'Leary, 1987). In the last decade, there has been a greater awareness of the experiences of children as witnesses and victims of family violence, and how the level and nature of that violence impacts upon family functioning and children's adjustment.

Fear and isolation often characterise families experiencing domestic violence. Blame is often accorded to women for its occurrence and for staying in relationships when violence continues to occur. For such reasons, domestic violence is often under-reported. Easteal (1994) proposed that violence in the family is not reported because of three rules that dominate in such family environments - *Don't talk, Don't trust* and *Don't feel*. Explicitly, women and children may be told not to discuss the violence outside the family and even within the family, the violence may not be discussed. Implicitly, there may be an ongoing denial of the reality so that the experience of the violence becomes normative. Children living with domestic violence learn that rules made, may not be enforced and that promises made, may not be kept. Parenting may be impaired by the unpredictable nature of domestic violence as women try to protect their children or compensate for the behaviours of the violent spouse. Children are likely to have reduced self-esteem and to have problems in developing social relationships with peers and other adults (Grossier, 1986 cited in Jaffe et al, 1990; Wolfe, Jaffe, Wilson & Zak, 1985).

Children's responses to witnessing the assaults on their mother may vary according to their age, sex and role in the family. Factors such as the extent and frequency of the violence, repeated separations and dislocations in place of residence, economic and social disadvantage may also impact on children's adjustment (Cummings & Davies, 1994; Jaffe et al, 1990). Violence does not necessarily cease on separation and continuing violence after separation presents ongoing stress on mothers and children (Johnson, Gonzalez & Campbell, 1987).

The age and sex of the child are two important child characteristics which have been studied in the research with children who are growing up in violent families. There are equivocal findings with respect to sex. While early studies found that behavioural problems were more common for boys rather than girls (Emery & O'Leary, 1982; Porter & O'Leary, 1980), later studies found that both boys and girls were adversely affected by exposure to parental conflict (Emery & O'Leary, 1984; Jouriles, Pfiffner & O'Leary, 1988). However, higher levels of violence have been found to be more strongly associated with poorer behavioural adjustment for boys (Trickett & Susman, 1989; Wolfe et al, 1985). Research findings with respect to age have not found that any one age group is more affected than another by parental conflict. Hetherington, Stanley-Hagen and Anderson (1989) indicated that although younger children may be less able to cope with conflict, they are also likely to be less aware of the conflict and its implications. Cummings (1987) in investigating children's responses to anger between adults found that 4-5 year old children showed more distress, but also more adaptive coping responses, than 2-3 year old children.

Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz (1980) reported that 40% of children who witness domestic violence are also victims of child abuse. Sternberg et al (1993) found that children who witnessed domestic violence and were victims of parental abuse exhibited higher levels of behavioural problems than children who were either witnesses to marital violence or who were abused. Effects which are attributed to child abuse only, may also reflect the additional effects of exposure to violence between parents (Trickett & Susman, 1989). Cummings and Davies (1994) note that the combined effects on child adjustment of observing parental violence and experiencing parental aggression are not clearly understood.

Two of the dimensions of marital disputes which are strongly implicated in children's adjustment are the frequency and the intensity of the conflict. Increased exposure to physical aggression is more likely to lead to a greater incidence of behavioural problems (Johnson et al, 1987; Jouriles et al, 1987; Porter & O'Leary, 1980). Johnson et al (1987) reported that the degree of verbal and physical aggression was related to children's behavioural problems two years after separation. More extreme levels of marital violence were also found to be associated with child behaviour problems (Jouriles, Murphy & O'Leary, 1989; Wolfe et al, 1985). Conflict which involves physical aggression across a period of time is also more likely to impact on children's subsequent adjustment (Hershorn & Rosenbaum, 1985; Holden & Ritchie, 1991; Jouriles et al, 1989). Shaw and Emery (1988) and Johnson et al (1987) found that parental violence often increased after separation and that the ongoing conflict appeared to be more closely related to internalising behavioural problems than externalising behaviour problems in children. Ongoing conflict may be centred on a child because of custody-related issues, pressure to enter into an alliance against the other parent, or parental dependence for emotional support. Such stress may induce withdrawal, anxiety or depression (Cummings & Davies, 1994).

FOCUS OF STUDY

In this study, young children's experiences of domestic violence and the effects of those experiences on behavioural adjustment were investigated. Consistent with other research findings, it was expected that higher levels of family violence would be associated with greater levels of behavioural problems in young children. Other factors reported in the literature which are likely to affect behavioural adjustment were also examined in a predictive model. Age, sex, abuse status of the child, the period of separation and the frequency of contact with the violent partner after separation were variables included in testing the model to explain the behavioural adjustment of young children who had experienced domestic violence.

METHOD

Subjects

Fifty-four mothers participated in this study that examined the medium-term effects of witnessing spousal violence on the behavioural adjustment of young children, aged three to six years. The mean age of the children (the oldest child of the mother, in the age range 3 to 6 years) was 5.3 years (SD=1.4). There were 25 girls and 29 boys in the sample. The women had between one and five children living with them. Seventy-six percent of the women's partners were the subject child's natural father.

The participants in the research were women who were former residents in women's refuges but who were living independently in the community when the study was undertaken. They were voluntary participants who were recruited through services provided to women who had experienced domestic violence. All the women had separated from their violent spouse and were not in a new domestic relationship. Seventy-two percent of the women reported that they had left their former partner more than once. Two-thirds of the mothers had been separated for three to twelve months and one-third had been separated for one to two years. The number of years that

the couples had been together ranged from 1 to 21 years with the mean length of the relationship being 7.5 years (SD=5.1 years).

Of the women, 31 % were aged between 20 and 29 years. Fifty-five percent were aged between 30 and 39 years and 12% were over 40 years of age. Fifteen percent had tertiary educational qualifications, 6% had college or paraprofessional training, 17% had completed secondary school, 54% had completed to Grade 10 of secondary school and 8% had completed primary school only. Seventy-one percent of the women were engaged with full-time household responsibilities at the time they were interviewed. All the women received an annual income of less than $22,000 and 81% were receiving a social security benefit.

Procedure

Structured interviews were conducted with each mother about the oldest child in the specified age group. The interviews took approximately three hours to complete and were conducted by women interviewers who were, or who had been employed in domestic violence counselling or refuge services. The interviews were also taped so that the interviewers' written records could be checked for accuracy.

Measures

Parental Conflict. The Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS) - Form R (Straus, 1992) was administered to the mothers. The CTS measures the frequency of verbal aggression and the number of acts of minor and severe physical aggression between the mother and her partner during the twelve months prior to separation. The CTS lists fifteen acts of verbal and physical aggression. The respondents were required to indicate how often their partner had carried out each action towards them and how often they had carried out each action in relation to their ex-partner during the last year of their relationship. Responses were recorded on a seven-point scale of frequency of occurrence, ranging from never to more than 20 times. The scores for each partner for the scale items were then summed to obtain a measure of family violence. Straus (1992) has reported moderate to high reliability for the scale. Across studies, correlations of agreement between reports from husbands and wives, have shown an average correlational agreement of 0.4.

Children's Experience of Violence. Mothers reported on their child's experience of violence prior to separation. This involved an estimation of the percentage of physical violence seen by the child. Mothers were also asked whether their child had experienced physical abuse. Abuse status was dichotomously scored as not abused (0) and abused (1).

Post-Separation Experiences. Mothers were asked to indicate the period of separation, and the frequency of the contact that their child had with the violent partner after separation. Frequency of contact was measured on a five-point scale from no contact (0) to daily contact (5). Mothers were also asked whether they had experienced verbal or physical violence in the post-separation period.

Child Adjustment. Mothers completed the Child Behaviour Checklist (CBCL) (Achenbach, 1991) for the subject child. The CBCL contains a list of 113 behavioural items which mothers rate on a three-point scale with regard to how well the behaviours describe their child. Nine narrow-band scales are derived from these items. These syndrome scales are withdrawal, somatic complaints, anxiety/depression, social problems, thought problems, attention problems, aggressive behaviour, delinquent behaviour and sex problems. Two broad-band scales are also derived from the items. These scales are internalising behaviour (the sum of the subscale scores for withdrawal, somatic complaints, and anxiety/depression) and externalising behaviour (the sum of the subscale scores for aggressive behaviour and delinquent behaviour). A total score for behavioural problems is also obtained by summing across subscales. The scores for internalising, externalising and total behaviour problems can be reported in a standardised form (T-scores) to enable comparison across

studies. The CBCL has been extensively used in studies of separated families, and has considerable normative data and satisfactory psychometric properties (Achenbach, 1991).

RESULTS

Level of Parental Conflict

The mean score on the Conflict Tactic Scale (CTS) for the number of minor and severe physically aggressive acts perpetrated by the mothers' partners in the last twelve months of the relationship was 17.88 (SD=12.60) violent incidents per year. For mothers, the mean number of acts perpetrated was 3.24 (SD=3.93). The mean scores on the verbal aggression subscale of the CTS for mothers was 13.25 (SD=7.19) and for partners was 24.47 (SD=6.44). The mean of the combined mothers' and partners' verbal and physical aggression scores (Family Violence Score) on the CTS was 60.43 (SD=21.2).

Children as Witnesses

Mothers indicated that 38.9% of the children witnessed 80 to 100% of violent incidents, 13% of the children witnessed 60 to 79% of the violence, 22.2% witnessed 40 to 59% of the violence, 14.8% witnessed 20 to 39% of the violence and 11.1% witnessed less than 20% of the violence. Only 3.8% of the mothers indicated that their child did not see any violence. In sum, half of the children witnessed at least 60 % of the violence.

Child Abuse

Forty-eight percent of the women reported that at least one child in the family had been physically abused by their partner. This included 35.2% of the subject children.

Post-Separation Experiences

Seventy-two percent of the women had left their partner more than once. The mean separation time was 10.1 months (SD=1.17). Mothers reported that 46.3% of the children had no contact or infrequent contact with their former partner and 55.7% reported frequent contact. For many of the mothers, the violence did not cease on separation. Seventy-four percent of the mothers reported that their partners had behaved in a manner which had frightened them since separation. One-third of the mothers were physically assaulted after separation and in fourteen of these eighteen cases, the children had witnessed these assaults. Fifty-four percent of the mothers also reported that during contacts with their former partner for reasons of child access, they were verbally abused.

Children's Adjustment as a Group

The results confirmed a higher than average level of behavioural problems among these children. The most frequently reported problems for male children on the CBCL syndrome scales were for withdrawn behaviours (e.g., rather be alone, won't talk), whereas social problems (e.g., acts young, clings) were most frequently reported for girls. A standardised score above the 90th percentile (T-score > 63) on the broad-band scales and for total behaviour problems on the CBCL has been proposed as the level at which clinical intervention with the child is warranted (Achenbach, 1991). Twenty-two (42%) of the children had scores for total behaviour problems that were above the 90th percentile. This trend was greatest for boys with thirteen boys and nine girls in the clinical range. For the externalising scale, 41 % of boys and 28 % of girls had behavioural scores which were higher than the 90th percentile. For the internalising scale, 26% of boys and 24% of girls had scores greater then the 90th percentile. More boys than girls were in the clinical range on these scales but these gender differences were not significant. The means and standard deviations for the children's scores on the broad-band scales and for total behaviour problems on the CBCL are presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1

MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR THE CBCL

	Overall (N = 54) Mean (SD)	Boys (N = 29) Mean (SD)	Girls (N = 25) Mean (SD)
Total Behaviour Problems	59.8 (10.1)	60.9 (10.8)	58.5(9.6)
External. Problems	57.4 (11.0)	58.7 (11.6)	56.0 (10.4)
Internal. Problems	57.0 (10.7)	58.8 (11.0)	54.9 (10.1)

Parental Conflict and Child Adjustment

Table 2 presents the correlations between the predictors and the child adjustment variables. Age was significantly associated with higher scores for total behaviour problems ($r=.29$, $p < .05$), and internalising behavioural problems ($r=.42$, $p < .01$). Higher levels of family violence were significantly associated with higher scores for total behaviour problems ($r=.34$, $p < .01$), externalising problems ($r=.31$, $p < .05$) and internalising problems ($r=.40$, $p < .01$).

TABLE 2

CORRELATIONS BETWEEN PREDICTOR AND CHILD ADJUSTMENT VARIABLES

Predictor Variables	Total Score CBCL	External. Scale CBCL	Internal. Scale CBCL
Sex	-.15	-.09	-.17
Age	.29*	.22	.42**
Abuse Status	.09	.08	-.02
FCTS[a]	.34**	.31*	.40**
Period of Separation	.21	.19	.20
Frequency of Contact	-.02	-.02	-.07

*p < .05
**p < .01
[a]FCTS - Score for Family Violence (combined scores for mothers and their partners) on the Conflict Tactics Scale

Relative and Joint Influences: Hierarchical Regression Analyses

A series of hierarchical regression analyses was conducted in order to explore the cumulative and relative influences of a number of variables on children's adjustment scores. The variables - sex, age, family violence score, child abuse status, period of separation and frequency of contact with the violent partner after separation were used the predictive model. The criterion variables were the scores for total behavioural problems and the scores for the externalising and internalising scales of the CBCL. For each hierarchical analysis, the first set of variables simultaneously entered was sex, age, abuse status and family violence score. A second set of variables representing post separation contact with the violent partner (period of separation, frequency of post separation contact) was then entered into each regression equation.

For the **Total Behavioural Problem Score**, sex and age, abuse status and the family violence score accounted for 21% of the variance (Adj. R^2 = 15%) and significantly predicted the total behavioural problem score, F (4,49) = 3.37, p = .016. After controlling for sex, age, child abuse and family violence, post-separation variables (period of separation and frequency of contact) did not add significantly to the prediction of the total behavioural adjustment scores, (R^2_{Change} = 3%).

For the scores on the **Externalising Scale**, sex and age, abuse status and the family violence score accounted for 22.7% of the variance (Adj. R^2 = 16.4%) and significantly predicted externalising scores, F (4,49) = 3.36, p = .012. After controlling for sex, age, child abuse and family violence, the two post-separation variables did not add significantly to the prediction of externalising scores, (R^2_{Change} = 3%).

For the scores on the **Internalising Scale**, sex and age, abuse status and the family violence score accounted for 27.2% of the variance (Adj. R^2 = 21%) and significantly predicted internalising scores, F (4,49) = 4.59, p = .003. The post-separation variables did not significantly improve the prediction of internalising scores (R^2_{Change} = 2%).

The details of these analyses are presented in Table 3. For each behavioural adjustment score (total behaviour problems, externalising scale and internalising scale), the family violence score made a significant contribution to the variance explained. For the internalising scale on the CBCL, the age of the child also made a significant contribution to the variance explained. Family violence prior to separation was the most single important predictor of children's adjustment. The amount of variance explained by the model tested in this study was improved by the addition of the variables for period of separation and frequency of contact, but this was not high. Overall, the explained variance of the tested models represented a significant effect on child adjustment scores.

TABLE 3

CHILD CHARACTERISTICS AND FAMILY EXPERIENCES AS PREDICTORS OF CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOURAL ADJUSTMENT

Criteria/Predictors (and Order of Entry)	Beta	R^2	R^2_{chg}
Total CBCL Score			
1. Sex	.14		
1. Age	.22		
1. Abuse Status	.09		
1. FCTS	.35**	.216**	
2. Period of Separation	.23		
2. Frequency of Contact	.14	.267**	.037
Externalising Scale			
1. Sex	.19		
1. Age	.16		
1. Abuse Status	.01		
1. FCTS	.39**	.227**	
2. Period of Separation	.22		
2. Frequency of Contact	.09	.274**	.036
Internalising Scale			
1. Sex	.08		
1. Age	.38**		
1. Abuse Status	.07		
1. FCTS	.30*	.272**	
2. Period of Separation	.19		
2. Frequency of Contact	.09	.307**	.024

*p < .05
** p < .01

DISCUSSION

Review of Findings

Consistent with past research (Hershorn & Rosenbaum, 1985; Holden & Ritchie, 1991; Jouriles et al, 1989; Radovanovic, 1993), higher levels of family violence prior to separation were associated with higher levels of child behavioural problems. Level of family violence was the strongest predictor for total behavioural problems and externalising problems.

Older children were more likely to have higher scores for internalising behaviours, so that age and the level of family violence were both significant in contributing to the prediction of internalising problems. Previous research has found a link between the level of parental conflict and internalising problems in divorced families, and age has been associated with this poorer adjustment (Cummings & Davies, 1994). The age effects may occur because older children have had greater exposure to family discord. Age-related effects could also be due to the development of more stable negative self-evaluations, greater self-blame, or increased feelings of helplessness which can develop as children grow older (Cantwell & Carlson, 1983; Harter, 1985).

Although sex of child, abuse status, period of separation and frequency of contact with the violent partner after separation made a contribution to the overall significance of the models tested, they did not independently make a significant contribution.

Interpretation of the Results

Family violence before separation continued to exert a strong negative impact on children's later adjustment. A limitation of the study was that there was no specific measurement of post-separation violence. In future studies, specific measurement of post separation violence should be measured and tested within the predictive model. High levels of family violence before separation could be indicative of continuing high levels of violence occurring in those families after separation, so that the chronic nature of the violence between the partners continued to impact on the children.

Other environmental stresses could have influenced the children's adjustment scores. These families had been dislocated for periods of time when families had used refuge services before moving to other accommodation in the community. The children had experienced disruptions to routines such as regular attendance in early childhood programs. Maternal stress due to separation, living in a refuge, financial problems and relocation of the family would also impact on the child. As Rutter (1981) suggests, such multiple environmental stresses may have the effect of exponentially increasing the incidence of behavioural and emotional problems.

Implications for Early Childhood Teachers

The results raise important implications for early childhood teachers. Firstly, there are child protection issues given the high level of reported child abuse in the families where domestic violence occurs. Teachers need to be aware of the relevant procedures for reporting child abuse within their organisations, as well as the legislative requirements within their state. Early childhood teachers also need to be aware of the resources available in the community which are concerned with child protection and family support. Secondly, teachers need to understand the extent of behavioural problems that young children with such negative family experiences may evidence and the ongoing nature of the difficulties that the mothers may have in managing children's behaviour after separation. There is a need for teachers to be aware that many of these children may exhibit internalising problems such as withdrawal, anxiety or depression. Children with these types of problems may not be noticed initially as having social-emotional difficulties, since aggressive or attention-seeking behaviours commonly elicit more active responses from adults.

Various strategies for supporting children who have experienced domestic violence have been identified (Butterworth & Fulmer, 1991; Ragg, 1991; Wallach, 1993). Their ideas provide important directions for how early childhood teachers can help young children cope with family conflict and domestic violence, in order to develop skills which will help them to deal with ongoing family stress. The early childhood teacher can provide an environment which has consistency in the routine and which has very clear expectations and limits on behaviour. Early childhood programs can provide interpersonal environments which are characterised by respect for

cooperative harmonious activities between males and females and for the development of problem-solving skills (Butterworth & Fulmer, 1991; Wallach, 1993).

The difficulties in responding to parental and children's needs are compounded when the children are transitory in their participation in an early childhood programs or irregular in attendance. Family accommodation may change a number of times between refuges and community-based accommodation. However, responding to the needs of these children, even on a short-term basis may have a substantial impact on their current and future capacity to deal with family stress.

The families represented in this study are only a small proportion of separated families and caution is needed about generalising to other populations. Although a high percentage of the children had behavioural problems, many others did not have behavioural difficulties. Future research should focus on identifying the specific experiences and opportunities which help children to cope with less than optimum family circumstances.

CONCLUSIONS

This study has provided important information into the experiences of young children who witness domestic violence and high levels of violence were a significant predictor of later behaviour problems. Almost half of these young children had levels of behavioural problems that would warrant clinical intervention. The children had witnessed a substantial proportion of the violence and many had also experienced physical abuse. Early childhood teachers need to be aware of the needs of these children and the nature of the problems which they may exhibit, since support for their social-emotional needs from an early age may foster resilience and help offset the possibilities of later behavioural difficulties.

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PUBLICATION OPPORTUNITIES FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD ACADEMICS

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ABSTRACT

Early childhood academics are under increasing pressure to enhance their research profiles by publishing in refereed journals. This paper reports on a study undertaken in response to that pressure. The editors of 121 Australian and international journals were surveyed to obtain information about publication policies and processes. They were asked about target audience, circulation, preferred content, the review process, the number of manuscripts received, acceptance rates and publication lag. They were also asked for their advice to intending contributors.

INTRODUCTION

The dismantling of the binary system of tertiary education in Australia in the late 1980s saw the provision of early childhood teacher education move from the CAE to the university system. Early childhood academics involved in this transition have had to adopt new roles, including that of researcher. Integral to research is the dissemination of findings through publication (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Bogdan & Biklin, 1992). Indeed, publication output is a widely regarded measure of research productivity and academic status. It influences perceptions of individual and institutional excellence and impacts on decisions concerning funding, employment, tenure and promotion, and the awarding of research grants (Bazeley, 1994; Ramsden, 1994; Webb, 1994; Beattie, 1993; Poole, 1993). Thus, for early childhood academics (and institutions) seeking to establish themselves within a university culture, publication - particularly in refereed journals - is vital.

Advice about writing for publication is readily available (e.g., Ross & Morrison, 1993; Moxley, 1992a; Moxley, 1992b). There is, however, relatively little information about publishing in specific refereed journals, apart from the brief Notes to Contributors in the journals themselves. Information about journals of potential interest to early childhood academics tends to be scattered, incomplete, outdated and US oriented. For example, Henson (1993) regularly surveys editors of 53 education journals in the US. Similarly, Gargiulo, Sefton and Graves (1992) surveyed 16 editors of US early childhood journals. Both surveys included a mix of refereed and non-refereed journals. In Australia, Harmon (1989) compiled information about eight refereed education journals, none of which related specifically to early childhood. Since these surveys were conducted, several new Australian and international journals have been established.

THE SURVEY

Aims

The survey reported in this article was prompted by the increasing pressure for publication and the lack of readily available, complete and up-to-date information about journals and their publication practices and policies. Funded by the Institute of Early Childhood as part of a program to assist novice researchers, the survey had three aims:

- to establish a data base of refereed journals in which early childhood academics might publish;
- to provide information to guide decisions concerning the submission of articles for publication; and
- to compile guidelines for intending authors.

This article focuses on the second of these aims.

Selection of journals

The multi disciplinary nature of early childhood is reflected in the wide range of journals which publish research related to young children, their families or the professionals who work with them. The journals surveyed were selected by a two stage process. Forty three academic staff of the Institute of Early Childhood were surveyed about their research interests and the journals in which they had published or would like to publish. The 31% of staff who responded nominated 30 research interests and 46 journals. Using these responses as a guide, a library search was then conducted for additional relevant journals. To keep the task manageable, preference was given to research interests mentioned by more than one staff member. Subsequently, 121 refereed journals were selected. Of these, 20 were primarily Australian while 101 were foreign/international. Some were specialist early childhood journals. Others reflected the diverse interests of early childhood academics, including psychology, sociology, teacher education, curriculum, multicultural and special education. Because of funding restraints, the journals selected were representative of those available and did not constitute an exhaustive list of possibilities.

Design

The survey was similar in design to those conducted by Gargiulo, Sefton and Graves (1992) and Henson (1993). Editors were questioned about audience and circulation, content, publication format, the review process, the number of manuscripts received, acceptance rates and communication with intending authors. In addition, they were invited to offer advice to intending contributors.

THE FINDINGS

Replies were received from 73 of the 121 editors surveyed, giving a response rate of 63%. The response from editors of Australian journals was higher (75%) than from those of international journals (60%). Not all editors completed all sections of the survey. Detailed information about specific journals follows the summary.

Audience and circulation

The audience for the journals surveyed, based on the number of paid subscriptions, varied from 90 to 60,000. Almost 70% of journals had less than 5,000 subscriptions while only 8% of journals had a circulation of more than 10,000. Nearly all journals (96%) targeted, at least in part, academics and/or researchers but only 6% of journals targeted practitioners solely. The number of issues per year ranged from 1 to 10, with 4 issues being most common.

Content

Almost all journals (97%) published research articles, with 30% of journals publishing only research articles. A question concerning the number of non-empirical articles as a percentage of all research articles caused confusion. The intention was to determine opportunities for publishing theoretical articles or reviews of literature, rather than data-based research. Some editors, however, interpreted *non-empirical* as *qualitative* while others argued that it was a meaningless distinction. Furthermore, 20% of editors did not attempt to answer. Consequently, the responses to this question should be interpreted with caution.

In general, however, there seem fewer opportunities to publish non-empirical research than empirical research. Twenty one per cent of journals published empirical articles only while, for another 21% of journals, at least three quarters of the articles published were empirical. In contrast, 4% of journals published non-empirical articles only and, for another 7% of journals, at least three quarters of the articles were non-empirical.

Sixty percent of journals published themed issues but, for most of these journals, themed issues were published only occasionally. Information about forthcoming themes was available either from the editor or the most recent copy of the journal.

Publication format

Most journals (73%) published between five and ten articles per issue. Almost two-thirds of journals preferred manuscripts of less than 5,000 words, while the remaining third asked for between 5,000 and 10,000 words. The American Psychological Association (APA) referencing style was required most commonly (by 56% of journals), followed by 'in house' or un-named style (16%), Harvard (15%), Chicago (8%) and the Australian Government Publication style (4%).

The review process

Most commonly, editors sent manuscripts to two or three reviewers (for 77% of journals), although 15% sent manuscripts to more than three reviewers. Reviews were undertaken blind (i.e., author's name unknown to reviewer) in 82% of cases. A small number of journals (5%) offered blind reviews upon request. The high percentage of blind reviews suggests that decisions are made on the basis of the quality of the manuscript, not the reputation of the author - in some ways, cause for optimism amongst beginning researchers.

Very few journals (3%) charged for reviews. The charge made by these journals was approximately $US20. Reviewers were provided with a rating instrument by 80% of editors. Almost all editors (93%) shared the reviews with the author.

Typically, the estimated average review time for manuscripts was up to three months (69%) or from four to six months (25%). Anecdotal evidence suggests, however, that these times might be a little optimistic. Publication lag - the time between acceptance of manuscript and publication - was usually between six and twelve months (62%). For 10% of journals, however, this extended to eighteen months, while 20% of editors claimed a lag of less than six months. In reality, however, these times may be longer.

Acceptance rates

Slightly more than 40% of editors solicited manuscripts for at least some issues, although these were not necessarily accepted. The number of unsolicited manuscripts received monthly varied considerably. Most commonly (36%) journals received between five and ten manuscripts per month. However, 19% received less than five manuscripts monthly; 18% received between ten and twenty, while 10% of journals received more than twenty unsolicited manuscripts monthly. Acceptance rates for unsolicited manuscripts varied from 8% to 80%. Half the editors surveyed, however, accepted between 20% and 50% of the unsolicited manuscripts they received.

Typically, manuscripts required revision before being accepted. Most journals (70%) required revision to all manuscripts which were accepted. Approximately 39% of all manuscripts eventually accepted required major revision. Overall, only 5% of manuscripts were accepted without revision.

Communication with intending authors

Most editors welcomed communication with intending authors, although they emphasised that it was not required. Those editors willing to be contacted preferred letter (82%) to facsimile (68%) or telephone contact (64%).

Advice to intending contributors

In general, editors advised intending authors to become familiar with the journal to which they intended to submit; to write clearly; to report meaningful research; to seek feedback from peers prior to submitting; to take account of the needs and interests of an international audience, where appropriate; and to follow the notes to contributors provided in the journal. The following advice was typical:

> *Read previous issues of the journal first to gain a clear idea of the audience and alternative formats. Read the "notes to contributors". Get some informal peer review before submitting. Note that it is an international journal and most readers will not know the details of the Australian context.* Editor, Teaching and Teacher Education
>
> *Know the audience and write clearly. Avoid jargon and academic pretence.* Editor, Journal of Curriculum and Supervision
>
> *Do meaningful research that is methodologically rigorous, describe it precisely yet in detail, and draw meaningful implications.* Editor, Topics in Early Childhood Special Education
>
> *Follow - to the letter - the 'notes for contributors'.* Editor, British Journal of Educational Studies

Advice of this type was pervasive. Heeding such advice seems essential!

CONCLUSION

The pressure to publish is unlikely to dissipate. Publication offers many intrinsic rewards, however, apart from the extrinsic motivators of funding, employment, tenure and promotion. Rewards include opportunities to share one's work with colleagues and interested others and, hopefully, to influence policy and practice. As well, publication offers greater professional recognition and a personal sense of achievement and closure. For these rewards to be realised, however, a number of challenges must be overcome.

Firstly, intending contributors need to target an appropriate journal. One's purpose for publishing must match the nature of the journal. If one's goal is to reach as many practitioners as possible, for example, then choice of journal will be different if one is targeting primarily researchers and academics. A specialist journal - albeit one with a smaller circulation - is more appropriate for disseminating highly specialised research. Similarly, for research concerned with Australian contexts and issues, a national journal may be more appropriate than an international one.

Secondly, intending contributors must be thoroughly familiar with the journal's style and conventions. Editors were emphatic that authors adhere to the required format. Careful study of the journal's *Guidelines for intending contributors*, therefore, is essential. Adherence to these guidelines will increase the likelihood of one's manuscript being accepted for publication and enhance the professional image of early childhood academics.

Thirdly, new authors need to develop confidence in submitting manuscripts to a range of journals. Blind reviews predominate, suggesting that author, cultural or gender bias in the reviewing process will be unlikely. Thus, novice authors are not discriminated against per se.

Ultimately, decisions about which journals to target must be personal decisions. Hopefully, however, this survey will alert early childhood academics to new publishing possibilities and assist them in making more informed decisions.

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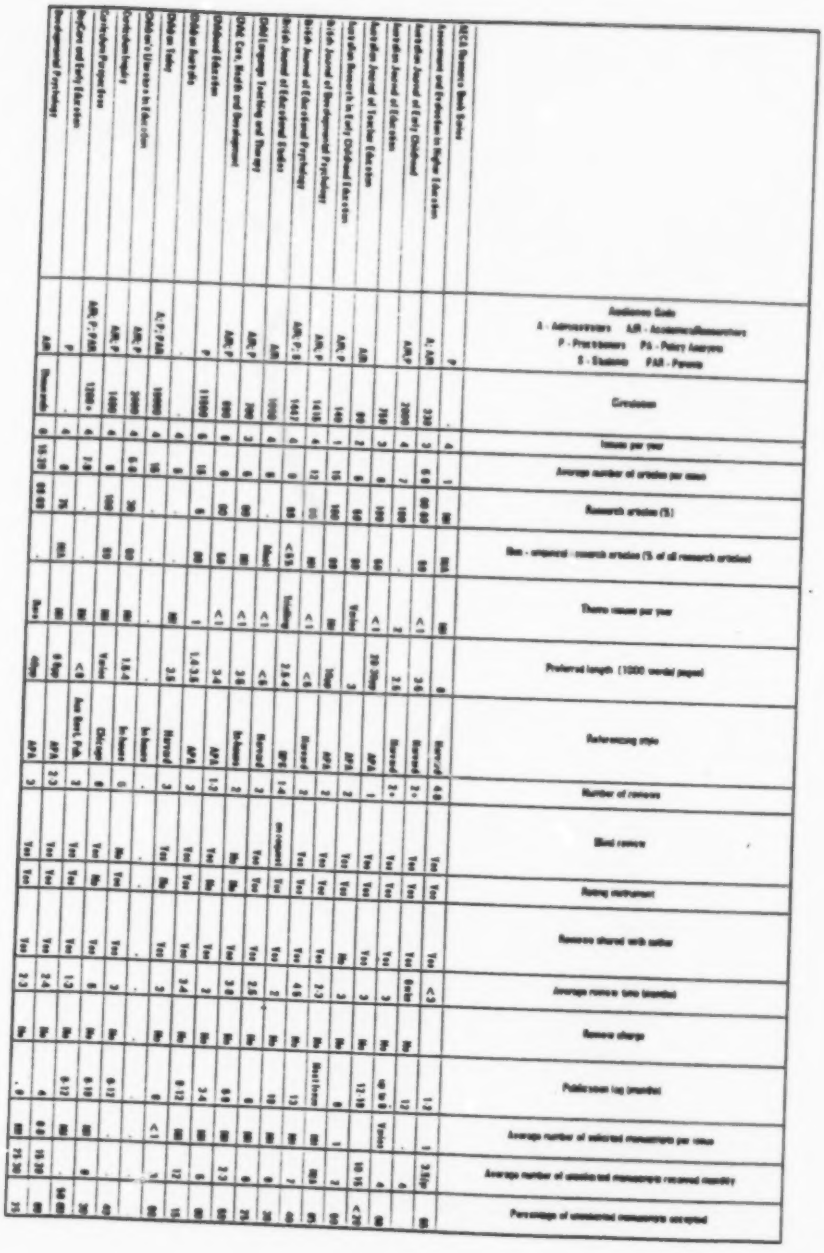

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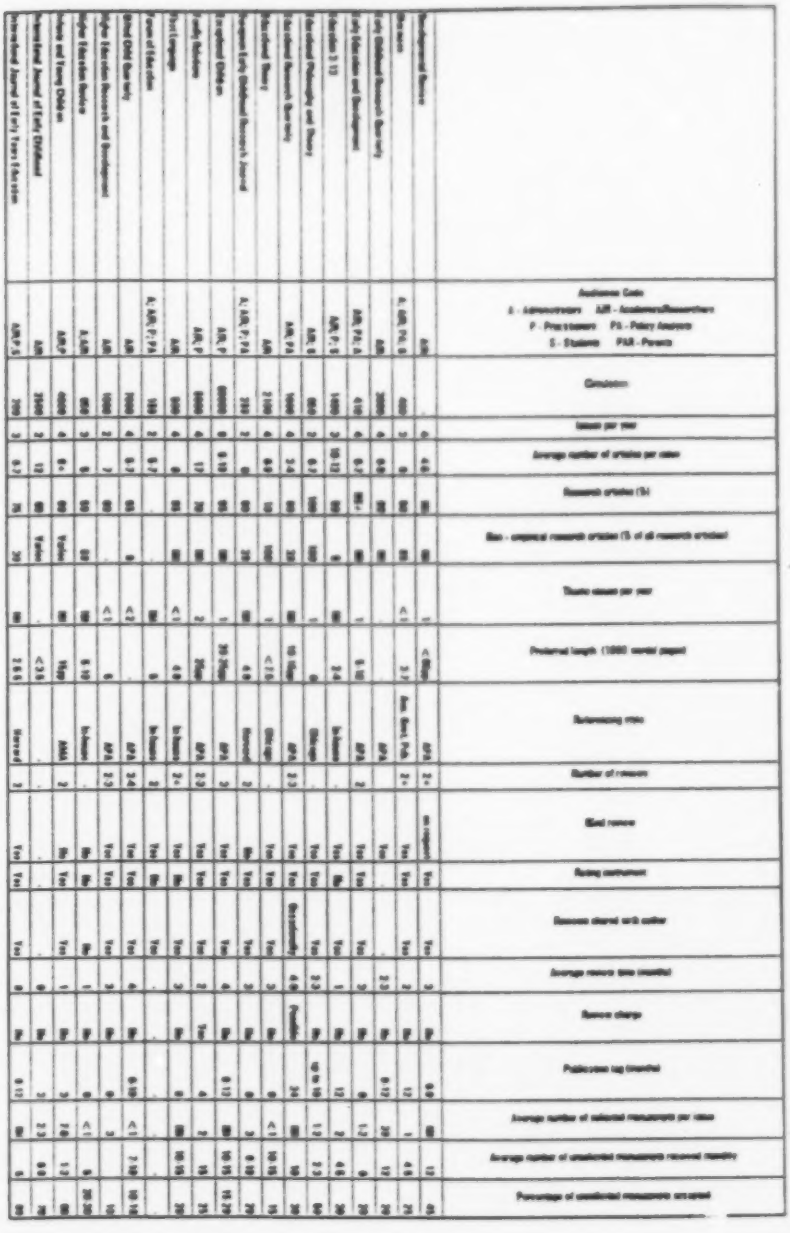

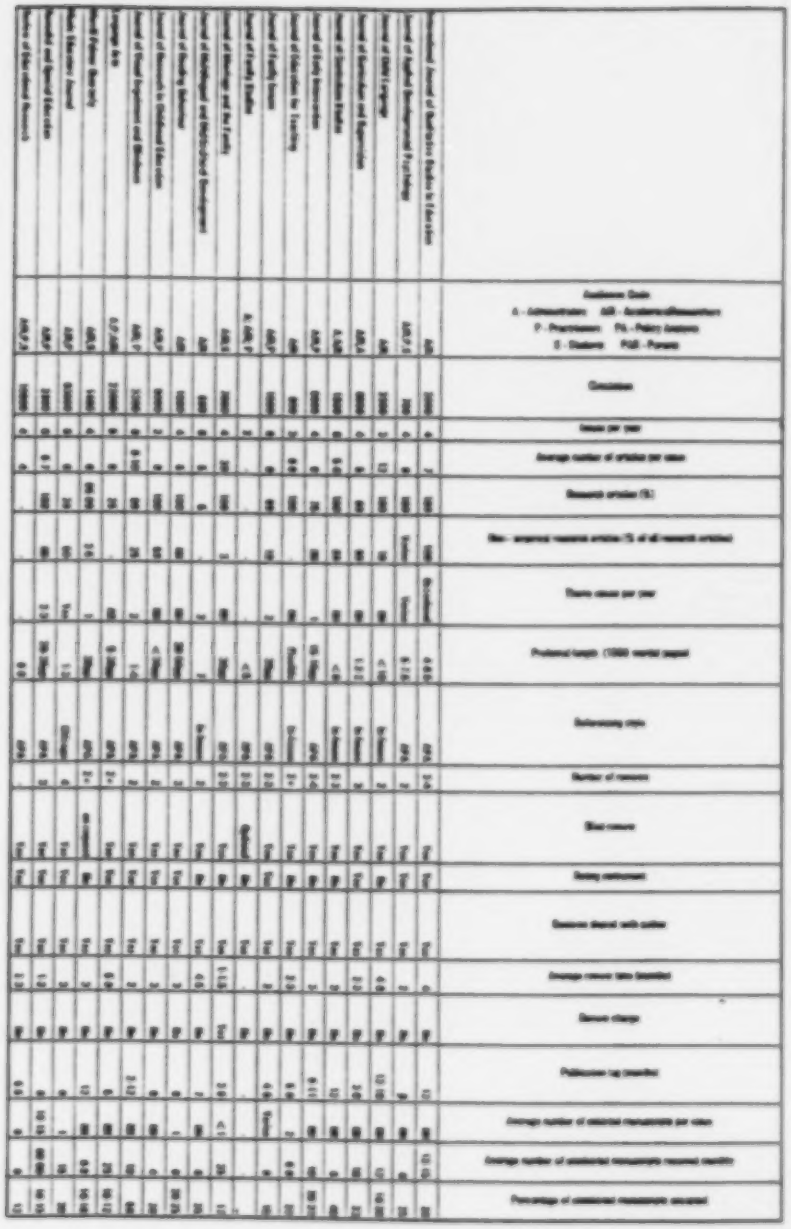

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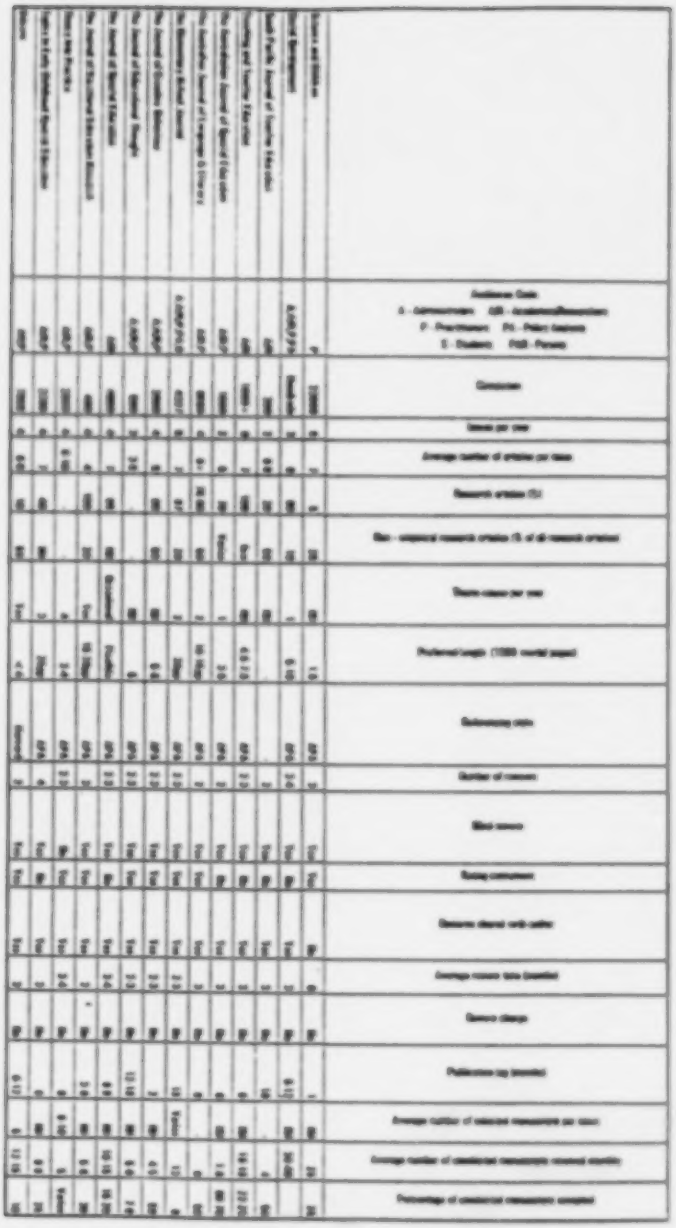

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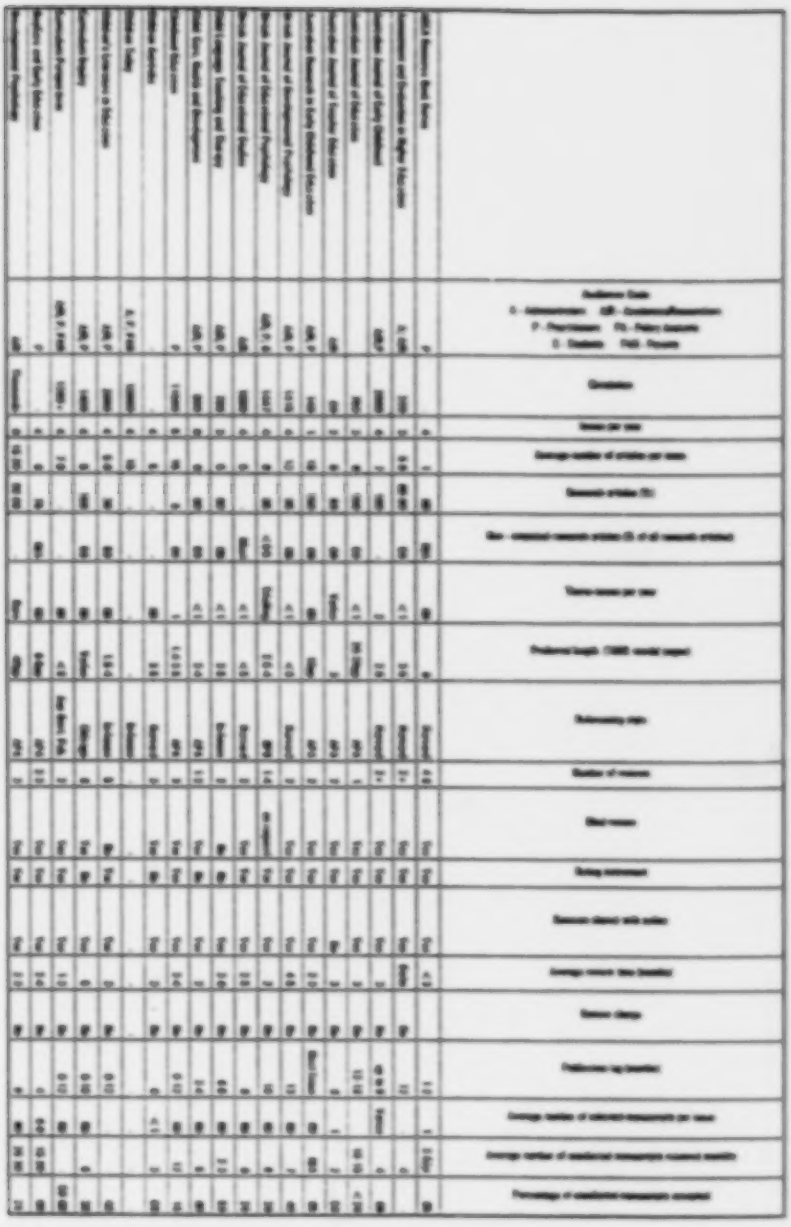

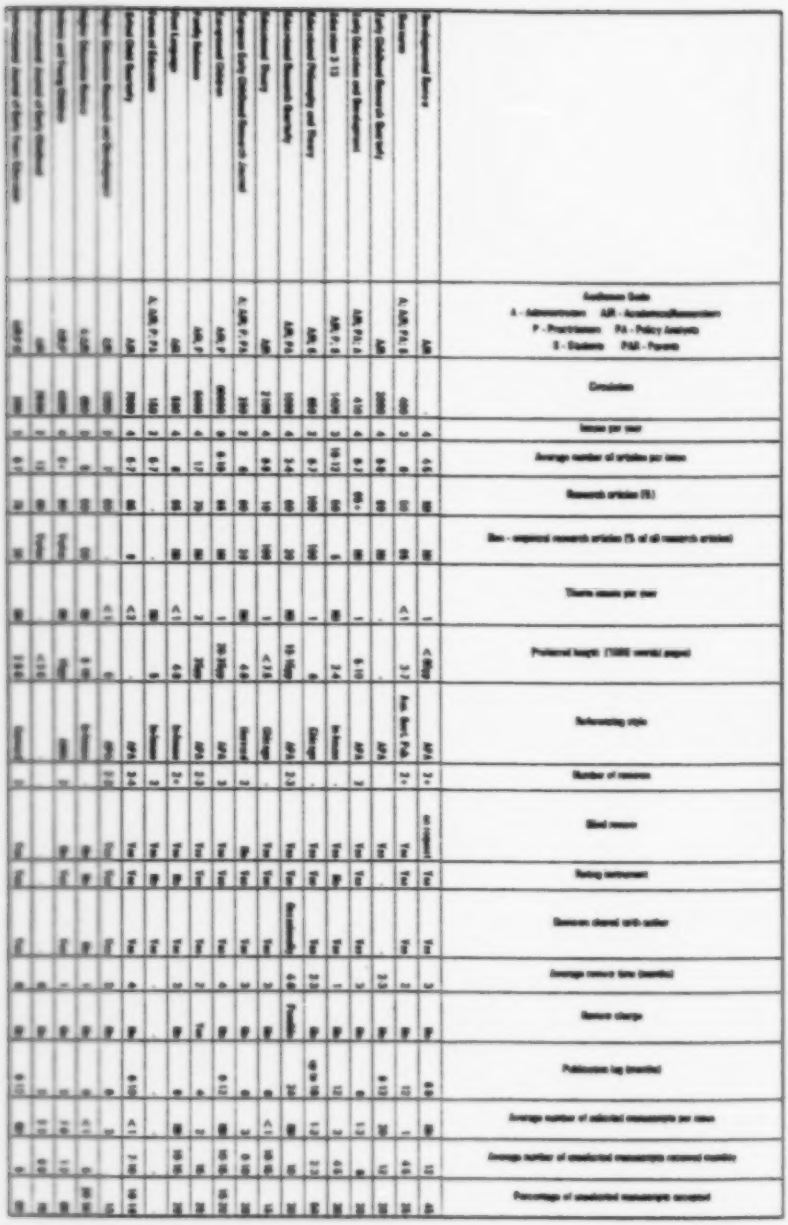

	Australian Journal of Early Childhood	Australian Journal of Early Childhood Education	Children and Young Children	Early Education and Development	Early Education	Early Years	Educational Psychology	Educational Theory	European Early Childhood Research Journal	Exceptional Children	Family Relations	Gifted Child Quarterly	Harvard Educational Review	Infant Behavior and Development	International Journal of Early Childhood	International Journal of Early Years Education	Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology	Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry and Allied Disciplines	Journal of Educational Psychology	Journal of Experimental Child Psychology	Journal of Research in Childhood Education	Merrill-Palmer Quarterly	Phi Delta Kappan	Reading Research Quarterly	Research in the Teaching of English	Review of Educational Research	Theory Into Practice	Young Children	Zero to Three
Audience Code A - Administrators AR - Academics/Researchers P - Practitioners PA - Policy Analysts S - Students PAR - Parents	AR	A, AR, PA, S	AR	AR, PA, S	AR	A, AR, PA, S	AR	AR, P, PA	AR, P, PA	AR, P	AR, P, PA	AR	AR, PA	AR, P, S	AR	AR, P	AR, P, PA	AR	AR	AR	AR	AR, P, PA	AR	AR	AR	AR	AR	AR	AR
Circulation		600	2000	1400	410	2000	7100	1000	850	6000	350	2000	7100	1000	850	350	6000	2000	2000	2000	2000	2000	2000	2000	2000	2000	2000	2000	2000
Issues per year	4	3	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	2	4	4	4	4	2	4	4	12	12	4	4	10	4	4	4	4	6	6
Average number of articles per issue	4-5	6	7-8	10-12	8-9	6-8	3-4	8-9	6-8	11	6-8	5-6	3-4	8-9	6-8	6-8	11	5-6	8-9	8-9	8-9	5-6	8-9	5-6	5-6	5-6	5-6	8-9	8-9
Research articles (%)	80	60	80	100	80	20	80	15	80	80	80	80	15	100	80	80	80	80	100	100	80	80	80	80	80	80	80	80	80
Non - empirical research articles (% of all research articles)	20	Varies	Varies	100	20	80	20	85	20	20	20	20	85	100	20	20	20	20	100	100	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20
Theme issues per year	1	1	1	1	1	<1	<1	1	1	<1	1	<1	1	1	1	1	<1	<1	1	1	1	<1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Preferred length (1000 words) paper	<4 (flexible)	3-7	4-6	6-10	4-6	4-6	4-6 (flexible)	4-6	4-6 (flexible)	4-6	4-6	4-6	4-6 (flexible)	2-4	4-6	4-6	4-6	4-6	4-6	4-6	4-6	4-6	4-6	4-6	4-6	4-6	4-6	4-6	4-6
Referencing style	APA	Aus Govt Pub	APA	APA	APA	Chicago	Harvard	APA	Chicago	APA	Harvard	APA	Chicago	Chicago	APA	APA	APA	Harvard	APA	APA	APA	APA	APA	APA	APA	APA	APA	APA	Chicago
Number of reviewers	2+	2+	2+	2+	2+	2+	2+	2+	2+	2+	2+	2+	2+	2+	2+	2+	2+	2+	2+	2+	2+	2+	2+	2+	2+	2+	2+	2+	2+
Blind review	Yes on request	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Rating instrument	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Reviews shared with author	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Occasionally	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Average review time (months)	4	2	3	3	4	2	4	4	4	4	3	4	4-6	2-3	3	3	4	4	3	3	3	3	3-4	3	3	3	3	3	3
Review charge	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Possible	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Publication lag (months)	6-10	6	6	6	6-10	6	6	6-10	6	6	6-10	6	12	6-10	6	6	6	6-10	12	12	6-10	6	12	6-10	6-10	6-10	6-10	6-10	6-10
Average number of submitted manuscripts per issue	4+	10	10	12	4+	10	12	10	12	4+	10	4+	12	12	10	10	4+	4+	12	12	10	4+	12	10	10	10	10	10	12
Average number of unsolicited manuscripts received monthly	15-20	5	10	10	15-20	5	15-20	15-20	15-20	15-20	5	15-20	15-20	15-20	15-20	5	15-20	15-20	15-20	15-20	15-20	15-20	15-20	15-20	15-20	15-20	15-20	15-20	15-20
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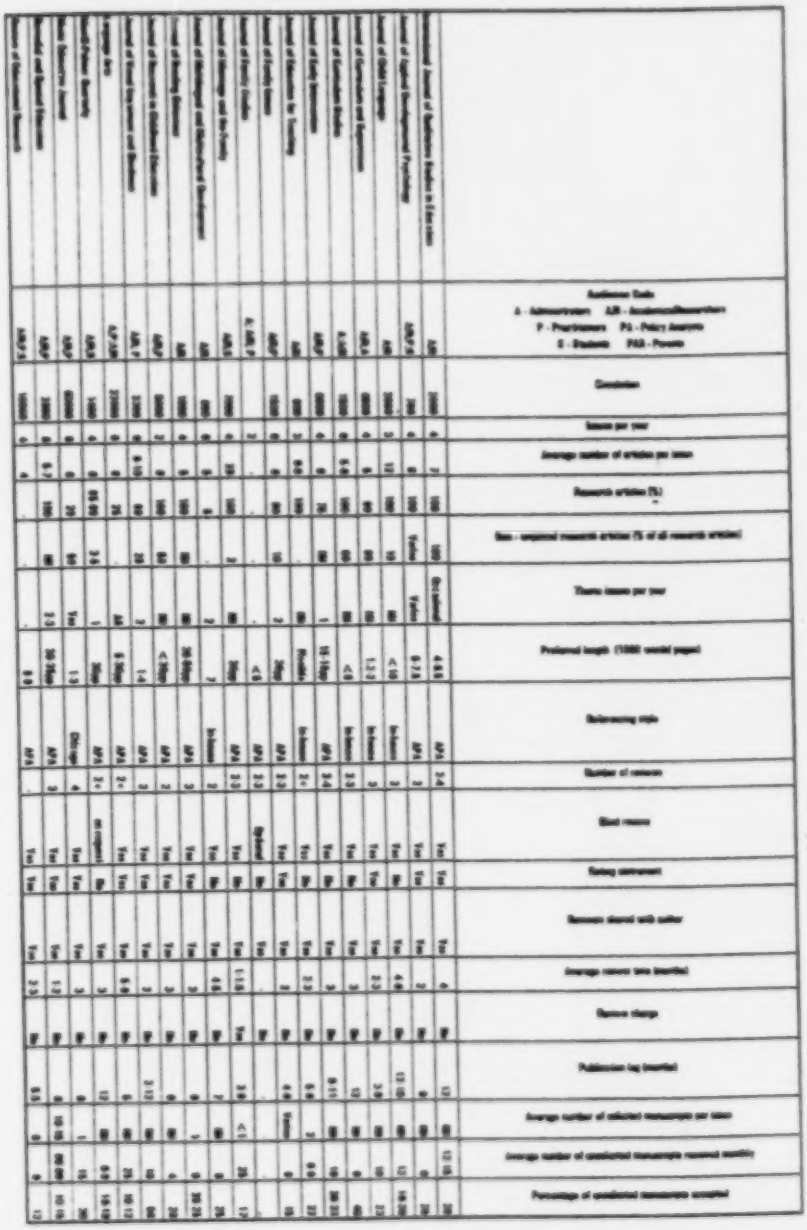

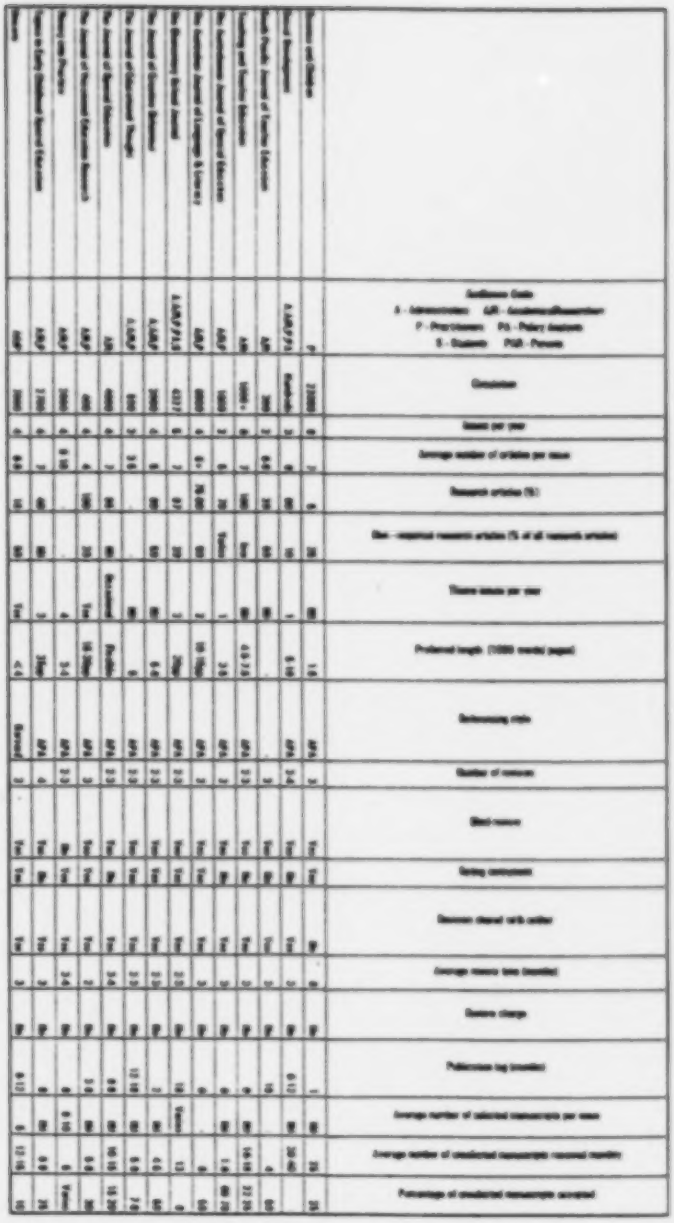

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ARTS GAMES FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

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ABSTRACT

Arts activities assume an important place in education programs for young children. Arts games are structured play activities based on drama, movement, music or any combination of these. They always involve at least one adult, who usually initiates and guides the play for varying numbers of children. Some games are played with one adult and one child, while others are group experiences.

This research is an investigation of arts games for children from birth to five years of age in a long day care setting. A set of traditional, folk and original drama, movement and music games was compiled by the researchers. The games were trialled by two early childhood teachers, one with a group of 2-year olds and the other with a group of 4-year olds. The teachers presented each game at least three times over a period of six weeks.

The teachers' reflections on the arts games themselves, their implementation and the children's responses provide the data for this study. Issues related to which arts games were favoured by the teachers; the factors that influenced implementation; the potential of the games to facilitate learning, creativity and artistry; and whether written descriptions provide an effective means of games transmission are examined.

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood educators seeking to provide a high quality education program within their settings acknowledge the critical importance of the arts as a component of the curriculum.

An examination of the literature related to early childhood games indicates the terms *games*, *play*, *play experiences* and *activities* are used interchangeably (Hartcher, Pape & Nicosia, 1988; Payne, 1993; Schaefer & Cole, 1990). Other researchers (Kamii & De Vries, 1980) have offered commendable explorations of the uses and benefits of games across curriculum areas but have not specifically examined them in the context of an integrated drama, movement and music curriculum for children aged from birth to five years of age.

The fragmented nature of early childhood arts research is evidenced by the significant numbers of studies that concentrate almost exclusively on one particular arts area such as drama (Haywood, 1981) or music (Barrett, 1993). Whilst such studies may offer useful insights, there is not always a strong link between the arts area under examination and other related arts areas.

Many studies investigating arts and games concentrate on children over three years of age (Brown, Sherrill & Gench, 1981; Deal, 1993; Howells, 1982; Lucky, 1990; Taunton & Colbert, 1984). Commonly, studies dealing with babies and toddlers do not address fully integrated drama, movement and music programs but, rather, explore a specific focus such as art and music (Kovacs & Albright, 1986), infant locomotion (Goldfield, 1989), perceptual motor development (Yonas & Hartman, 1993) or symbolic representational ability (Masur, 1993).

There is strong consensus in the literature that developmentally appropriate, well planned and competently executed arts experiences result in positive outcomes for young children (Brodhecker, 1987; Dyer & Schiller, 1993; Larkin & Suthers, 1994; Leninowitz & Gordon, 1987; McMahon, 1986; Wright, 1991). Such outcomes include child autonomy, decision making and imagination; identity, self image and confidence; perceptual motor development; communication, tolerance and cognitive growth and development.

Arts games uniquely provide structured play experiences that are based on drama, movement, music or any combination of these. Such games always involve at least one adult who commonly initiates, facilitates and guides the play with the participating child or children. Arts games are diverse in nature, ranging from a simple rhyme shared with an infant at nappy change time, through to an energetic movement and music experience involving a larger group of children and several adults. For children aged from birth to five years, arts games do not rely upon complex rules. The games emphasise cooperation rather than competition or elimination. With attention to group size, arts games do not involve lengthy periods 'waiting for a turn'. Rather, all participating children are productively engaged throughout. Importantly, arts games provide a structure for early childhood educators, who recognise the value of the arts in their curriculum design but express concerns about their personal competencies as teachers of drama, movement or music.

This paper seeks to outline the positive contribution of arts games in early childhood arts programs and in wider educational contexts. It describes the results of an investigation undertaken with children aged from two to five years in a long day care setting where a series of art games was implemented and evaluated. Through careful examination of the teachers' reflections on the trialling, some insight into the suitability of the games for use in early childhood programs is afforded.

In studying early childhood arts games, the researchers determined to investigate their use in a long day care setting where the games could be used with groups of children of differing ages and incorporated into their regular programs. Specifically, answers were sought to the following questions:

- Which arts games are favoured by the teachers? Why?
- Do arts games facilitate the learning and development of children aged from 2-5 years?
- What factor/s influence the implementation and outcomes of the arts games?
- Do written descriptions of arts games enable teachers to effectively learn and implement new games?
- Do arts games enable teachers to provide expanded opportunities for child creativity and artistry?
- What are the children's responses to arts games?

RESEARCH DESIGN

The centre that agreed to participate in the study was a 90-place inner city setting which catered for a culturally and socio-economically diverse community. The centre employs an early childhood trained teacher in each room. The Cloud Room (2 year olds) and the Sun Room (4 and 5-year olds) were chosen as these two teachers had very similar backgrounds. They had trained at the same institution and were both in their third year of teaching. Neither teacher had a particular interest or expertise in the arts. One of them, in fact, explained that she was quite apprehensive about singing. Whilst both teachers acknowledged the importance of arts experiences in early childhood curricula, both reluctantly admitted that their existing programs were limited in scope.

The researchers selected 20 arts games, ten suitable for 2 year olds and ten for 4 and 5-year olds. The games represented a variety of drama, movement and music experiences as well as some games that combined aspects of two or three arts. The games selected are listed in Table 1 (Larkin & Suthers, 1995).

TABLE 1

TWENTY ARTS GAMES USED IN THE PROJECT

GAMES FOR 2's	GAMES FOR 4's & 5's
Follow the sound	Action rap
Jack be nimble	Imitate the fall
Musical hoops	Lap ball
Over the stones	Little grey ponies
Pass the ball	Musical hoops
Roll the ball	Obwisana
Under and over	People skittles
Wake up you sleepyheads	Sound moves
What does the cow say?	Three ropes in a circle
Who's under the blanket	When I was one

The teachers were given a detailed description of each game which included equipment required, suggested group size, procedures for playing the game and possible variants to extend or modify each game. The precise nature of the implementation of each game was, however, determined by the teacher and included in her program as she deemed appropriate. The researchers asked only that each game be played at least three times over a six week period.

After every playing of a game, the teachers completed a comprehensive evaluation. They were asked to consider issues related to the game itself, their own role in the implementation of the game and the children's responses. Other items included contextual information such as the time of day, number of children and adults involved and whether the game had been played previously. Additional data were gathered when the researchers visited the centre to observe and video the children playing the games. The participating teachers were committed to the notion of action research, played all games and completed, in detail, 60 evaluations. Throughout the study, they demonstrated a strong commitment to the project and consistent levels of professionalism.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis of the teachers' evaluations showed that a range of factors influenced the outcomes of the games. Most of the teachers' evaluations, however, took the form of guided reflection on the influence of factors such as group size, location, play space and attendance patterns on the children's responses; their own appraisal of the game and its appropriateness for their group; the teaching strategies used in implementation, any modifications devised; and their personal responses. The following provides an indication of the significant patterns and recurring trends that emerged from the data.

Arts games teachers favoured

The teachers were happy to incorporate all the arts games into their programs. As anticipated, they expressed preferences for particular games. They stated that they would definitely continue to use

seven of the 20 games in the version provided. Another six games they thought they would probably use in a modified version, or as a transition, or with a specific age-group. Their reported preferences may have been influenced by the participation of other staff, space, time, group size and composition and the teachers' own skill, teaching style, predilection for certain types of activities and confidence in the arts.

Arts games that facilitated learning and development

In their evaluations, the teachers described over 75% of the games as "developmentally appropriate" for the children they taught. Further, they believed that the games facilitated the children's development in a variety of domains, specifically physical, social and cognitive. The arts games provided opportunities for the development of physical skills such as running, jumping, ball handling skills, balance and coordination; social development was enhanced through working in groups, cooperating, taking turns and sharing space or equipment; cognitive skills such as memory, sequencing, counting, listening and problem solving were used; and opportunities for individualised responses gave children contexts in which to be creative and imaginative. For example, in *Musical hoops*, the children move or dance freely to teacher-selected recorded music. At various times during the game, the teacher stops the tape and the children rush to stand in one of the hoops placed about the floor. Any number of children can go to the same hoop and there is no elimination. As a variant of the game, the teachers gradually removed hoops until, at the end, all the participating children had to squeeze into one or two hoops only. The teachers reported that this game provided opportunities for the children to develop physical skills through locomotor movement and dancing; social skills of cooperation and sharing space; cognitive skills such as auditory discrimination, naming the colours of the hoops, counting hoops or the number of children in one hoop. Creativity was exhibited particularly by the 4 and 5-year olds in their dancing, some of which was individual and some involved groups of two or three. The 2-year olds, as expected, generally preferred to jump, run or twirl on their own when the music was played.

Factors influencing the implementation of arts games

Analysis of the teachers' reflections and observations by the researchers indicated that four factors were influential in the successful playing of the arts games:

- grouping of children
- children's interest and motivation
- teachers' modifications and strategies
- teacher confidence

Grouping of children

Group size was seen as an important influence on the success of the games by both teachers. Each reported that they determined the group size for playing according to the nature of the game to be played. Games that required careful observation, discussion or individual responses such as *Who's under the blanket* and *Imitate the fall* were thought to be most effective with a small group while games where all children were active throughout such as *Wake up you sleepyheads* and *Action rap* could be successful with more children involved. Both teachers preferred to work with what they described as small- or medium-sized groups with only one adult facilitating the play. They noted that this allowed for easy participation by all children in the group, a minimum of waiting and facilitated teacher-child interactions. The teacher of the 2-year olds was quite explicit about her preference for a 'small group', and used groups of five to eight children in over 50% of occasions on which she played arts games. The teacher of the four and five year olds generally used a group of eight to fifteen children. Some of the games included for trialling needed more than one adult participant and the teachers felt this to be problematic to the extent that involving

another adult in the play automatically meant a larger group size. Both teachers generally used groups with a mix of girls and boys and included a range of chronological ages.

Selecting a suitable environment was an important consideration for both teachers in playing arts games. They used indoor and outdoor areas, frequently playing the same game in the playroom on one occasion and outside the next time. Whether indoors or out, the size of the play space was considered crucial by the teacher of the younger group. She stated that for nine of the ten games she played, a large space without any potential safety hazards was essential for the children to move about freely. Further, for some games that required listening, high levels of concentration or problem solving, she felt that ideally the space should also be free of distractions and noise. The teacher of the 4's and 5's was much less concerned about issues related to space. Two of the games *Over the stones* and *Little grey ponies* were also to be used by the teachers during the project as transitions when children were moving to the bathroom and going from the playroom to an outside area.

Children's interest and motivation

Both teachers reported that the children were generally enthusiastic and excited about playing games and quickly developed favourites. They recorded that little teacher motivation was required for the children to participate in the arts games. Frequently the sight of ropes, puppets, balls or musical instruments was sufficient to stimulate their interest . Once the children had played a game, simply inviting them to play it on subsequent occasions was all that was needed to have them clustering around, eager to begin. During the playing of the games, the most commonly used teaching strategies recorded by both teachers were positive reinforcement and accurate verbal feedback to individual children. The teacher of the 2-year olds noted that she most frequently praised the children for their efforts, offered encouragement and provided feedback to individuals. For example, 'Well done, Inez. You remembered to jump into the hoop when the music stopped.' She also found that her own participation was a powerful motivating factor for the children. It provided a model for the children, clearly demonstrated her involvement as a player, and some instances - such as crawling under a rope - caused hysterical laughter from the 2-year olds. Similarly, the teacher of the 4-year olds reported that motivating strategies were generally related to praising and supporting the children's endeavours, questioning to help the children find a solution to a problem and giving feedback to individuals. She also recorded that some of the strategies she employed were necessitated by the desire to manage child behaviour.

Teachers' modifications and teaching strategies

Both teachers also reported that they modified some games during implementation. Many of these modifications were spontaneous and in response to a child's suggestion. For example, in *What does the cow say?* the children make a variety of animal sounds. On one occasion, a child spontaneously flapped her 'wings' as she squawked in response to 'What does the cockatoo say?' The teacher reinforced this response and extended the idea by encouraging not only static actions but also whole body locomotor movements for animals as diverse as kangaroos, platypuses and kookaburras. The teachers also introduced some other modifications as a result of their initial implementation of a game. For example, taped music was added to *Pass the ball* and a song became part of the playing of *Who's under the blanket?* Other modifications were designed to specifically meet the needs of individual children or to incorporate a particular interest or challenge. The teacher of the four and five year olds encouraged a group of children to construct a barn from wooden blocks which they used in *Little Grey Ponies*. And the first time that the 2-year olds played *Jack be nimble*, the teacher used one wooden block as the candlestick. She observed that most children playing found jumping this quite easy. The next time they played, she used a large, upturned, wooden block to extend the children's jumping. This time, she noted that several of the players were unable to jump the larger block. On the third occasion that the children played *Jack be nimble*, she used two blocks of different heights and invited the children to choose the candlestick over which they wished to jump.

Teacher confidence

Teacher confidence was the fourth significant influence on the implementation of the games. As stated previously, neither teacher had a specialisation in the arts in their background or training. In fact, one stated that, 'Generally in drama, movement and music, I don't feel really confident'. The other agreed, adding, 'I would like to use a larger variety of games. I tend to stick to the same old things'. All the arts games except one were entirely new to the participating teachers and they had not used some of the equipment such as ropes, hoops and sticks previously in their arts program.

Another issue related to the teachers' background and confidence was which aspects of the games they chose to emphasise. Both readily seized opportunities that arose related to social, physical and cognitive development and were much less quick to capitalise on opportunities for extending creativity and artistry. The researchers attributed this aspect of their implementation to the fact that in both teachers' training, cognitive, physical and social/emotional development were covered in far greater depth than creativity. This emphasis was reflected in their practice.

Teachers' response to written descriptions of arts games

The implementation of the arts games required the participating teachers to read written descriptions of the games and transform these into dynamic arts experiences for their children. The teachers generally found the detailed instructions were very clear. Nevertheless, they felt more comfortable with some games than others and, in some, they happily incorporated both spontaneous and planned modifications. In their reflections, both teachers perceived a link between their own confidence and the success of the implementation of a game. For example, one wrote of *Musical hoops* 'I felt confident with the game and, as a result, the children responded well. By contrast, in reflecting upon a playing of *Under and over*, she reported, 'I was a bit unsure so the game didn't seem to flow'. Generally, the games that provoked the most anxiety in the teachers were those that required them to sing a simple song during the play. The task of learning a new song from a written format rather than a tape or from a colleague was not always easy and sometimes uncertainty about whether it was 'correct' caused further concerns when it came to singing it with the children. The researchers believe there are clear implications regarding the necessity of preservice teacher education to provide experiences that help students develop confidence in singing and attempting new and unfamiliar arts activities.

Children's responses

Both teachers reported that the arts games provided positive experiences. They consistently reported high levels of enjoyment for the children. One teacher wrote that, 'The majority of the children love games, especially those which involve an element of role play (such as *People skittles* and *Little grey ponies*) or those which create suspense (like *Who's under the blanket* and *Wake up you sleepyheads*)'. The children also developed preferences for particular games which they demonstrated regularly by asking for their favourites. There were frequent requests for *Musical hoops* from the 2-year olds and the older children demanded *Action rap* on a regular basis. It was also reported that the children in both groups enjoyed the opportunities that arts games provided for individualised responses. The 2-year olds almost always responded to the stimulus of arts game on an individual basis, while the 4 and 5-year olds often worked in groups of two or three such as in what the teacher called cooperative group dancing.

As the teachers preferred to play the arts games in small or medium sized groups, second and third playings often involved children who had not been present previously. It was noted that these new players had no trouble quickly accommodating a new game by observing and imitating their peers. For the children involved in the study, arts games appeared to supplement their arts program in an enjoyable and positive way.

CONCLUSIONS

The study showed clearly that arts games were easily incorporated into early childhood programs for 2 to 5-year olds. The teachers reported that the arts games provided positive experiences for their children, encouraged a range of responses, catered for a range of developmental levels and, generally, were open to encourage individualised responses. Specifically, they noted the potential benefits of arts games to the children's social development, physical development, cognitive development and creativity. The children also demonstrated that the arts games were a positive addition to the program. The children's responses indicated that they found the games enjoyable and stimulating.

The researchers also concluded that the teachers' training was influential in their implementation of the arts games. While at all times the teachers were thoroughly professional and positive in their interactions, their playing of the games did not, in the researchers' opinion, achieve optimal levels of creativity and artistry for the children. The combination of the teachers' varying confidence and lack of strong arts backgrounds meant that they were not always able to challenge and extend children or capitalise on incidents, suggestions or responses the children made.

It is simplistic to state that, had the arts games been implemented by practitioners of greater teaching experience and demonstrated expertise in the arts, the results would have been significantly different. However, it is relevant to consider that, with different arts training in their undergraduate teacher education course, these two teachers may well have felt more confident and competent to pursue the creativity and artistry inherent in the games.

The work of Jeanneret (1995) with generalist K-6 teachers highlights the strong correlation between the nature of teacher training and confidence in teaching music to children. She holds that teacher training courses that afford students practical opportunities to encounter music as musicians better equip them to engage the children they teach in appropriate and creative music experiences in the classroom. In early childhood arts education, this is certainly an issue that requires more investigation.

The researchers would contend that a replication of this study would be highly desirable, using a greater number and variety of arts games, facilitated by early childhood educators with a range of arts teaching backgrounds and years of teaching experience. This would assist the field in better understanding what links there may be between training, years of teaching experience and arts teaching competencies. Given the already overcrowded undergraduate early childhood program in most universities it would appear unlikely that the arts will suddenly assume a greater place or command more time. Consequently, it provides a significant challenge to make existing arts programs operate more effectively to better prepare graduates to teach not only with skill, but with creativity.

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